Journalism, activism, alternative media:
The Link and the McGill Daily, 2000-2010


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# Abstract

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Student newspapers, as an object unto themselves, have in the past been subject to very little scholarly examination, particularly in Canada. However, such publications are a unique site where students can engage in the production of publications with significant reach, assisted by the particular institutional arrangements that characterize these papers. Student journalists in such a position may seek to articulate journalistic identities, practices, ideals and standards that are distinct from 'mainstream' journalism (and which take up a progressive political mission or 'activist' orientation). This thesis examines two Montreal English-language student newspapers which have historically sought to fulfill a mission as politically-engaged publications, Concordia University's the *Link* and the *McGill Daily*, for the period of reference 2000-2010 – with particular respect to the ways in which the content of the two newspapers and reflections of student editors describe how they negotiate their particular social positioning (including tensions between 'professional' and 'activist' orientations to their work as journalists). In pursuing this examination, self-representations (in print) of the respective papers' histories, their involvement with and interventions in Canadian University Press, incidents of media critique directed at mainstream media, the ethical and normative journalistic standards described in guiding documents and by writers and interviewees, cases of change or acute tension with regard to 'professional' and 'activist' orientations, and coverage of anti-globalization and anti-police brutality protest events are discussed, tracing a selective history of the publications examined.

*For Andrée-Anne, and for all those who are pretty sure they're fighting the good fight wherever it matters.*

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In a more direct connection, I wish to acknowledge the support of my supervisor, Dr. Jean-Philippe Warren, and my appreciation for the participation and engagement of my committee members Dr. Greg Nielsen and Dr. Mike Gasher. All oversights and overindulgences here are, of course, strictly my own responsibility.

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# Introduction

## The Link and the McGill Daily read against the mainstream:
## Journalism, activism, 'alternative media'?

Student media, and student newspapers in particular, have been curiously understudied given the substantial number of people involved in their production (including a great many prominent alumni) and as readers of university-based publications which may print upwards of 10,000 issues per week, their frequently high-quality content (with many papers often furnishing journalists to the professional realm), and the past and present inclination of a number of papers to seek to define a unique identity and range of coverage oriented towards a progressive or 'activist' social and political agenda. This is a particularly notable omission in the burgeoning literature on 'alternative media,' a classification for which many student newspapers, at least since the 1960s, would seem to vie, but an area of research in which they have generally been elided or treated only in passing.

At a time when academic interest in alternative media (and 'alternative journalism') remains ascendant due to the widely-acknowledged importance (Atton 2001; Downing et al 2001; Rodriguez 2001; Howley 2005; Atton and Hamilton 2008; Hamilton 2008; Atkinson 2010) of examining outlets, ideas and practices which seek to offer supplement or corrective to the problems of the mainstream (corporate) media and when a key focus is on the ultimate contestability, hybridity and variability of normative orientations and practices which undermine hard conceptual divisions between 'mainstream' and 'alternative' (Atton and Hamilton 2008; Hamilton 2008; Elgul-Bibawi 2009), it is especially pertinent to examine student journalism, hovering as it does between identification and commitment to both a wider social field of journalism (itself dominated, to a significant extent by professional practice which largely takes place in mainstream news organizations) and to marking out an 'alternative' position that seeks to correct for perceived problems in the

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wider field. The student press in Canada, as discussed in Chapter 1 (where I review what little pertinent literature is available), has at times been an incubator for dissent and a forceful challenger to mainstream journalism – yet barely a handful of works discuss its history or present instantiations.[1] This thesis seeks to examine the extent to (and ways in) which both such challenges and student journalists' identifications with a more 'professional' sensibility more easily reconciled with the mainstream may be located in recent instantiations of the *Link* and the *McGill Daily*.

At heart, the key question that began my research is a broad one: What is journalism? What is it to report (and comment on) the news? Here, I explore this question in the context of student journalism at two independent student newspapers, one at each of Montreal's two major English-language universities. In this context, more so, it appears, than in those of established commercial (mainstream) publications, the question is – for some, at least – often unsettled. Given the relative freedom granted by institutional arrangements (non-profit status, significant funding from student fee-levies, and an absence of formal barriers to participation), high turnover of personnel and – a central thread which runs through the analysis here – what I call (following Atton and Hamilton 2008) the 'liminal' positioning of student journalists (see Chapter 2) in negotiating tensions which arise between more 'professional' and 'activist' orientations, student journalism is a particularly open and contested terrain. That is, as the remainder of this work seeks to demonstrate, student journalists, *in many instances* – through *their practice of generating journalistic products* (i.e. reporting and commenting on the news) and through their own accounts of their normative orientations and ideals – define student journalism (their own, and that of their respective publications) in ways which alternately (and often simultaneously) identify with

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[1] Notable exceptions include Sullivan (1976) and Lemon (2004); only one academic work I was able to locate discusses the current state of the student press in Canada as an entity unto itself, and this in the context not of a study of student newspapers or their producers, but of a survey of reader expectations among students at York University in Toronto (Wozniak 2007).

and challenge mainstream or professional journalism, and which frequently appeal to an 'activist' political mission for the student press that may furnish some of that challenge to (and in turn be challenged by) more 'professional' orientations. Articulating the two sets of orientations in relation to one another is, I propose, a useful way of looking to answer the question: What is it to report (and comment) on the news at the *Link* and the *McGill Daily*?

The present work examines the history, people, ideas and practices of Concordia University's the *Link* and the *McGill Daily*, Montreal's most storied English-language student newspapers, in the period spanning 2000 to 2010. Of particular concern are the political orientations and commitments of the respective papers (which each have their own separate and interconnected histories as left-oriented publications), how these inform normative orientations to the task of journalism, student journalists' role in mediating social movement and activist messages and turning a critical eye to the issues of the day, and how they might be seen as *alternative(s)* – and, at times, direct challengers – to the mainstream press. While this study focuses primarily on ways in which these papers may *position themselves as alternatives, I wish to avoid an overly polarized dichotomy* between 'mainstream' and 'alternative.' In fact, it is a key contention of this study that student journalists at the respective papers consciously seek to articulate and enact an 'alternative journalism' while still maintaining commitments and orientations which link them to a wider field of journalism which is shared, in large part, by their mainstream counterparts.

This point is intended to reinforce a view that acknowledges the relative autonomy of journalism, variability within the field, and the positive ideals and 'openings' for progressive political change (Carroll and Hackett 2006: 24) that it already presents at the same time that this thesis seeks to address criticism of the mainstream – particularly some of its failings vis-à-vis contentious political issues, social movements and protest (notably in the case of public demonstrations, but also more generally in terms of diversity of perspective

and openness to dissent) identified by academics, activists, alternative media advocates and student journalists alike. Overall, this study seeks to highlight a series of striking and sometimes perplexing issues and events that arise through examination of the recent history of the *Link* and the *Daily*, and to critically elaborate some of the orientations, tensions and concerns which student journalists negotiate in their own practice and in addressing the field of journalism more generally, media representation of contentious political issues, social movements and protest, and the need both to establish their own unique position and to legitimate their activities and products.

The history of papers including the *McGill Daily* and the *Georgian* (predecessor to the *Link*), tied up with that of a once-radical Canadian University Press which took up those papers' (and others') suggestion to brand itself an "agent of social change," only to distance itself from the moniker in the early 1990s (Lemon 2004), is at times one of journalistic innovation (featuring 'non-objective reporting' and path-breaking investigative inclinations in the 1960s, for example). Some papers, such as the *Link* and the *Daily*, still carry forward some instantiation of the ethos of the 'agent of social change' idea, and student media remains a popular student activity, a reasonably well-read media type, and an important site of training and experimentation for prospective journalists and others with interest or investments in media-making. In light of work such as Lemon's, which details a declining politicization of the student press in the last decades of the 20th century, and the dearth of current research on the subject, I seek to investigate the broad themes outlined above through my analysis of the *Link* and *Daily*'s most recent instantiations.

The *Link* and the *Daily*, as papers which have a long history of association with left-oriented social movements and of challenging journalistic convention (as touched on in Chapter 1 and discussed further in Chapter 3), and as the two most prominent English-language student newspapers in Montreal, offer an opportunity to examine two

publications which have maintained, despite the apparent retrenchment of the politically-engaged role for the student press at CUP, explicit commitments to an 'activist' orientation as well as to producing journalism which appeals to more 'professional' standards of quality. My own interest in examining these publications arises from a broader interest in social movements and protest which has occupied me from my time as an undergraduate; in previous research (e.g. into anti-globalization, anti-police brutality, contemporary anarchist and the New Left movements) it had come to my attention that student newspapers are often a rich source of information, accounts and analysis largely unavailable elsewhere.

From this, and the glaring centrality of the intersection of movement activity and news media (see, for example, Gamson and Wolfsfeld 1993), arose an increasing attention to alternative and student media, and to journalism more generally. As a long-time reader of the *Link* (and to a lesser extent, the *Daily*), and in light of my experience as a former contributor to the *Carillon* at the University of Regina (where I was voting staff, and contributed mainly political commentary and concert reviews), I had a sense that the student press represented a vital and largely unexplored site for 'alternative' accounts, and that these two papers demonstrated a similar political inflection and proclivity to cover (and comment upon) – in interesting ways, divergent from mainstream outlets such as the *Gazette* – topics and events related to social movements not always well-represented in the mainstream press. Considering the *Link* and the *Daily*, and the normative orientations of student journalists there, in the 2000-2010 period,[2] I seek to demonstrate that the politically-engaged student press discussed by Lemon (2004), despite somewhat of a denouement in some quarters, is alive and well at the *Link* and the *Daily* – though

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[2] To a significant degree, it also a desire to remain contemporary, to be timely (a value more associated with journalism than academia) which prompts me to look at the most recent years of these publications, notably in how they position themselves vis-à-vis mainstream media and how they address protest movements which emerged with some strength in the early 2000s (e.g. anti-globalization).

throughout the present study, I also emphasize that an 'activist' orientation often exists in tension with more 'professional' orientations (implying distance, neutrality, balance or even 'objectivity'), and that rather than a clear cut 'alternative,' it is best to consider these papers as occupying a 'liminal' position, as 'hybrid/alternative media'.

Following up on the review of literature pertaining to the history of the student press, which establishes elements of an account of student media which precedes the 2000-2010 period, and sets up later discussion about the political mission and journalistic practices of the student press, as well as outlining past researchers' insights into the role and operations of student newspapers, Chapter 2 is a more general review of theoretical literature which outlines and addresses:

**1.** A general sociology of media and journalism which focuses on a Bourdieusian perspective by which journalism can be viewed as one field of social activity among others, subject both to outside influence and to its own specific (though contested) internal standards and considers both the essential role of the kind of mediated representations produced in the news media and the ways generally speaking, in which they may be limited and limiting, including via the exercise of an assymetrical concentration of symbolic power which allows mainstream jounalism a relatively privileged role in defining social reality (Bourdieu 1998; Benson and Neveu 2005 Couldry 2003), by projecting a reified view of the 'public' (Hall et al 1978), and via the operations of 'regimes of objectivity' (Hackett and Zhao 1998) which serve to legitimate the privileged place of news media and present conventions which may limit diversity of voices represented and act (in concert with these other elements) as a force for conservation and against social movements and activism.

**2.** Works addressing the relationship between mainstream media, social movements, activism and protest, including both a discussion of 'framing' in social movements and news media and specific critiques of mainstream representation of protest from the New Left to

those movements cast under the rubric of anti-globalization, seeking to make clear both that media representation is an essential terrain for movement contestation, and that mainstream representations of protest can be problematic from a movement perspective.[3]

**3.** The notion of 'alternative media' as an attempted corrective to the ills of mainstream media, serving diverse communities (and providing a platform for diverse voices), contesting mainstream representations, fostering participation and eroding the concentration of symbolic power in mainstream media organizations (though the separation of media form and content into 'alternative' and 'mainstream' is never absolute).

**4.** Works in the tradition of Communications and Journalism Studies which emphasize, in contrast to the highly abstract sociology of media presented in part (1), that journalism, as a practice negotiated by its practitioners (and not without its own potentially positive – if sometimes ambivalent – ideals) offers 'openings' (Caroll and Hackett 2006: 24) in addition to its limitations (indeed, that it is possible to conceive of an important opposition between 'journalism' and the 'news industry' (Gasher 2005) which imposes much of the institutional constraint which fosters negative effects in mainstream news production).

**5.** The conclusion, on my part, that the student journalism of the *Link* and the *Daily*, while perhaps offering *alternative*(s) to the mainstream in many instances, may be provisionally conceived as a form of hybrid/alternative journalism which occupies a liminal space on the margins of the journalistic field, negotiating a commitment to the standards of the broader field (dominated by the mainstream, though student journalists may appeal to the virtues of *good* 'journalism' in opposition to the vagaries of the 'news industry') while seeking,

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[3] The latter is a topic which is specifically addressed in Chapter 6, where I review and discuss the presentation of protest events associated with anti-globalization and anti-police brutality movements – case studies which are particularly pertinent to consideration of how the Link and Daily may be seen as *alternative(s)* to the mainstream in that both, sometimes associated with elements of police-protester confrontation and property damage, entail precisely the types of protest events which have prompted critique of mainstream representations (and practices) in the past (e.g. Adler and Mittleman 2004; Jha 2007; Rosie and Gorringe 2009, etc.)

sometimes in conjunction with influences (and allies) from adjacent fields such as those of activism and the academy, to stake out positions which often involve implicit or explicit challenge to the institutions, practices and products of mainstream journalism.

In light of the history of the student press and the theoretical background which I draw out from the literature up to this point in the first two chapters, Chapter 2 concludes with a review of methodological considerations pertaining to the data employed in the subsequent analysis, outlining how articles from the respective papers were selected for inclusion in the study, and providing information on the 28 interviews with student journalists conducted to furnish further grist for my analysis (as well as outlining other primary documentary sources employed). Ultimately, this thesis proceeds by way of a critical reading through themes relevant to the general concerns outlined above, moving through a variety of issues with an eye to providing more than a single tightly delimited point; the present study is much less an exercise in hypothesis-testing or an occasion to expound on a single detail of journalistic practice or ideology than a broad exploratory effort at mapping the terrain. In the absence of a great deal of precedent in addressing student media in Canada (as 'alternative' or otherwise), and considering the interest of several interviewees in a project which takes a general view of their newspapers (an interest which gives this project some purpose beyond the strictly academic), I seek, on one hand, to provide a wide-ranging history. Yet any effort such as this clearly requires some specification, not only to guide the process, but to indicate to the reader the broad strokes of its argument. For the time being, it should suffice to specify, and to briefly justify, the key themes that guide the work, before continuing to outline the logic by which the following chapters of the analysis proceed. Specifically, the critical reading presented here, of published texts and the reflections of student journalists I interviewed, focuses on five interrelated themes:

1. *the public self-presentation of the respective papers' history and (current) identity*: In the

absence of any work outside of the *Link* and *Daily*'s own pages which brings together a history or general account of the publications, it strikes me as important to focus on any representation of the papers' respective pasts that appear there (though these are relatively few and far between). Such accounts, which form the backbone of Chapter 3, provide insight into collective and individual self-conceptions (through self-presentations) of *Link* and *Daily* staff vis-à-vis their historical contexts. In similar fashion, though with more direct reference to the present, I examine pieces in which staff articulate the mission(s), goals, and role(s) of their publications on campus and in the wider community (thus furnishing self-presentations to their reading public), sometimes in their own defense in the face of criticism, and otherwise intended either as though-pieces, opinion or overtures/introductions to readers. Such content is particularly important to examine as the present study is predominantly interested in how student journalists themselves conceive of their enterprise.

**2.** *their social and political role vis-à-vis social movements and activism*: A key concern in discussions of 'alternative media' and critiques of mainstream journalism is that the latter provides insufficient 'openings' for dissent and progressive social change; while the history of the Canadian student press (that of the 'agent of social change' clause at CUP, and of papers including the *Georgian* and the *Daily*) indicates a variable historical tendency to act as 'alternatives,' it is not necessarily clear how contemporary student journalists conceive of their role relative to that of social movements and activism, and how this inflects their practice. Therefore, this study seeks to take up and examine writing in the *Link* and *Daily* that addresses this theme, as well as the reflections on this topic gathered through interviews. Each chapter of the analysis addresses this theme in its own way.

**3.** *journalistic orientations and ideals (professionalism vs. activism)*: Studies such as Lemon's (2004), and the literature on 'alternative media' and critique of mainstream coverage of

dissent more broadly, tend to emphasize that aspects of 'professional' journalistic orientations (e.g. those which emphasize broad appeal and 'objectivity') may be cast in opposition to more 'activist' orientations. However, student journalism is tied to a wider field of journalism, and thus student journalists negotiate standards and practices that are primarily defined in the mainstream. Given a commitment to avoid an overly polarized dichotomy between 'alternative' and 'mainstream,' this project seeks to explore the tensions and differential negotiations of what might be broadly cast as 'professional' and 'activist' orientations. In this light, it is particularly useful to examine content which discusses journalistic orientations and ideals, whether those of student journalists themselves or those of others, to further draw upon the reflections of interviewees on this topic, and to address events in which such tensions and negotiations are manifest. This theme is the primary focus of Chapter 5, though it is essential throughout the analysis.

**4.** *critique of mainstream media and journalism*: Given my interest in considering the positioning of student journalists relative to the wider field of journalism, and the possibility that the *Link* and *Daily* may sometimes serve as *alternative(s)* to the mainstream (especially vis-à-vis contentious political issues, but also more broadly on the terrain of the mediascape itself), instances in which the respective papers and their staff explicitly address themselves to mainstream media organizations, practices and representations are particularly pertinent. Content that does this (the primary focus of Chapter 4), and the reflections of student journalist interviewed which contextualize their enterprise relative to perceived problems with the mainstream, are addressed throughout this work.

**5.** *protest event coverage and commentary (anti-globalization, anti-police brutality):* Established academic critiques of mainstream coverage of dissent highlight a number of problems with the coverage of protest events, especially those which include some element of confrontation or property damage; concerns about mainstream media representation of

protest are also a key impetus to both the practitioners and advocates (academic and otherwise) of 'alternative' media. Coverage of such events underscores the intersection and interrelationship of social movements and journalism, and it is therefore of particular interest for this project to examine protest event coverage and commentary, as well as the reflections of student journalists interviewed with respect to this topic. This theme is the primary focus of Chapter 6 (though also explicitly addressed in Chapter 4); there, I choose to concentrate on protest events associated with anti-globalization and anti-police brutality movement protest (in Montreal/Quebec), as these have tended present cases in which social movement framing and mainstream news framing have been particularly at odds.

These interrelated themes have directed my research from its earliest stages, guiding the selection of articles, the choice of particular issues and events on which I focus in the analysis, and both the questions asked in interviews with student journalists and the content of responses which has been most closely considered and presented here.[4] In keeping with these themes, and with the more specific directions that emerged as I pursued my research, I have crafted my analysis, which proceeds through four chapters:

Chapter 3 briefly introduces the two papers, touching on their basic operations (circulation, financing and participation) and the political orientations laid out by their guiding documents (the *Daily's* Statement of Principles and the *Link* Publication Society Mandate) before launching into a primary focus on how the papers' (and their host institutions') past is treated in retrospective writing (including anniversary issues which present highlights of the papers' histories and timelines of key events, historical features on past student activism, and the reminiscences of alumni), drawing out a vision of the publications' association with left-progressive causes, boundary-pushing ideas, muckraking

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[4] See Chapter 2 for methodological considerations related to the sources of data employed here, both from the content of the papers themselves and from interviews (as well as additional material considered as context); see Appendix 2 for a sample interview schedule indicating the questions asked of interviewees.

investigative journalism and public protest. In doing so, I treat the subject matter as *lieux du memoire* (Nora 1989), neither strictly memory nor history, but rather sites which carry elements of both, representing contemporary imaginaries in depicting the past. It is my contention that the selection and treatment of issues and events in these pieces illustrate how student journalists in the period of reference view their activities and their respective publication in historical context – especially with reference to a political role which emphasizes their often-'alternative' (but not unambiguous) self-conception and self-presentation to readers.

Chapter 4 seeks to elucidate the positioning of student journalists at the *Link* and the *Daily* in instances where they address the mainstream media directly, critically weighing in on the operations of the mainstream. I present three distinct cases that describe various aspects of student journalists' positioning vis-à-vis mainstream journalism. These cases highlight how such positioning reflects a tendency to identify alternately with and against professional journalists depending on context, and to defend ideals associated with a wider field of journalism (*as well as the legitimacy of particular social movements or struggles ill-treated in mainstream coverage*) against the actual practices of the mainstream press.

The first case presents a long-running theme of antagonism relative to Montreal's only mass-circulation English-language daily, the *Gazette*, and its corporate parent (as of August 2000), CanWest. While some writing from the period of reference indicates a general antipathy towards what one Daily columnist describes (before the CanWest purchase, the immediate aftermath of which sparked considerably more attention) as "a poor excuse for a newspaper,"[5] the primary focus of this thematic investigation is on the ways in which student journalists may provisionally align themselves with both professionals and academics (on the side of 'journalism' writ large, as a public good which benefits from

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[5] 'Zachsky'. "A Gazette of Jacobean Proportions." *McGill Daily*, 10/4/2000: 17.

autonomy, diversity and stable labour conditions for professionals) in opposition to the practices and pressures of the 'news industry.' In particular, CanWest's imposition of national editorials in 2001, intolerance of dissent from within its publications, apparent political bias and efforts to maximize profits against the interests of professional journalistic labour are a recurrent subject of coverage and critique in the *Link* and Daily (though issues of journalistic labour and precarity, and critique of the 'news industry' more generally, notably extend to other media organizations as well).

The second and third cases, however, have a decidedly different flavour, in that they trace out instances (each focusing, in detail, on two articles from the student papers) that may be taken as exemplary of positioning against the mainstream. The second case appearing in Chapter 4, taking up a subject that presages the focus of Chapter 6, presents a detailed critical reading of two pieces which attack the *Gazette*'s coverage of protest events associated with student activism targeting policy-makers shifting the financial burdens of postsecondary education onto students. In both instances, Daily editors use comment pieces to deconstruct and criticize (pulling no punches) *Gazette* journalist's accounts – thus enacting a dual operation by which they both assert the legitimacy of protest (on an issue which particularly concerns students) and appeal to journalistic standards to condemn mainstream coverage, thus highlighting possible tensions between elements of (mainstream) journalistic practice and activism.

The third case presents two relatively unique instances in which editorials in the respective papers present readers with episodes in which student journalists were solicited by mainstream media organizations seeking information or comment – and in which, due to the alleged journalistic malfeasance of these organizations, the *Link* and the Daily refused to comply. Their complaints here, centering on critique of 'shallow' efforts at maintaining an appearance of balance or 'objectivity' and failure to address 'real issues' in politically

contentious situations, provide an effective segue to discussion in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5, taking up considerations from the final case examined in Chapter 4, begins with a critical reflection on how normative journalistic orientations concerned with ideas including 'balance' and 'fairness' (as alternatives to 'objectivity') may relate to the political 'mission' of the *Link* and *Daily*. I suggest that 'balance,' if conceived as operant within a particular piece of writing mandated to represent 'both sides' of a contentious issue, may be seen as overly constraining, and seemingly counter to specific provisions of the *Daily* Statement of Principles and the *Link*'s Mandate. Conceptions of 'fairness' or 'balance' as 'political neutrality' are similarly constraining, and seemingly counter to the political mission outlined in the papers' guiding documents or described by interviewees. 'Fairness,' however, may be a significantly more plastic notion – and more easily inflected with political commitments to furnish a 'voice to the voiceless,' or otherwise take up the stance of activist or advocate.

Following a discussion which presents and considers the views of student journalists regarding the role and normative orientations of the student press, and which draws heavily on interview material (and ultimately underlines many student journalists' skepticism towards notions of objectivity and balance, and the political commitments held by some), I present two cases which trace the history of tensions and negotiations between 'professional' and 'activist' orientations at the *McGill Daily* and The *Link*, respectively. In looking at the *Daily*, I draw on content and interviews to discuss what some former editors have described as movement through a "cycle of politicization" which saw the paper shift from a collective orientation towards greater 'professionalism' (emphasized, following a period in which the paper was criticized by some as overly 'doctrinaire' in its leftism, by a number of editors from the late 1990s through the early years of the 2000-2010 period) to a more politicized left-wing or 'activist' stance by the middle of the decade.

Finally, I present the case of a crisis that arose at the *Link* in 2000-2001, which heightened tensions between 'professional' and 'activist' orientations. At that time, the paper was criticized by both Palestinian solidarity group SPHR and the then-radical Concordia Student Union as biased and undemocratic in its operations, in light of negative or critical coverage of events concerning both organizations and the barring of a *Link* contributor associated with SPHR from writing news articles about the group. The paper was ultimately the subject of a petition seeking to dissolve the organization and the situation – and the *Link*'s efforts at self-defense – provide an unusually high-tension example of the conundrums which face journalists dealing with activist groups, and the dual identification of some student journalists with 'professional' and 'activist' orientations. Ultimately, this case draws attention to how student journalists were both troubled by assertions that they were 'not real activists,' and tended to fall back on standards, such as those barring conflict-of-interest (and defensive positions, including the implication of political neutrality), drawn from the wider field of journalism. Both the more general treatment of the normative orientations of student journalists discussed (notably skepticism vis-à-vis the possibility of political neutrality) and the more particular examinations of the respective papers' past struggles with the tension between 'professional' and 'activist' orientations foreground the unique positioning of the *Link* and the *Daily* and the complex and shifting terrain which surrounds these tensions in practice (thus highlighting all the more the inevitable hybridity of journalistic enterprises and practices which fail to always fit neatly with 'mainstream' or 'alternative' classifications).

Chapter 6 takes the question of tensions between 'professional' and 'activist' orientations in a different direction, and seeks to document and read critically the presentation of a selection of protest events by the *Link* and the *Daily*. The aftermath of protest events where confrontation and property damage occurs are in a sense paroxysmal

moments in the symbolic struggles which are an essential part of social movements and activism, where movement-generated framing of events and news framing (see Chapter 2) are often in an antagonistic relationship; as those particular aspects of the events become central, protesters are cast (often via collective attribution) as disorderly and violent, and 'episodic' accounts (Iyengar 1991) rule the day. As a result, movement messages are sidelined (that is, treatments of the substantial contentious issues raised are often shallow at best) and protest and protesters are thwarted in their struggle for legitimacy in the public eye. In many cases, protesters are presented as marginal, unruly, incoherent or unreasonable in their views and tactics, and particularly prone to violence.

Rather than effectively conveying why protesters are in the streets, mainstream accounts often rely on official sources dismissive of protest as they recount the events in question. While I wish to underline that this is neither universal nor inevitable in the mainstream press, such tendencies with regard to coverage of protests associated with radical-left perspectives (from the New Left to anti-globalization) have been repeatedly identified and subject to critique by academics (e.g. Gitlin 1980; Murdock 1981; Owens and Palmer 2003; Adler and Mittleman 2004; Howley 2005; Dupuis-Deri 2006; Jha 2007; Rosie and Gorringe 2009; Leung 2010) as well as by activists and others. This is not to say that the actions of some participants are not problematic, or should be ignored in media accounts; rather, I suggest that, given that social movements are inevitably composed of diverse elements – and have very real concerns – it is possible to present the kinds of protest events which elicit the coverage targeted by these critiques differently (and that this possibility is often better-realized in the *Link* and *Daily*).

Chapter 6 describes the coverage the *Link* and the *Daily* have given to protest events, including the run-up and aftermath to particular demonstrations, associated with anti-globalization (focusing on the period surrounding the 2001 Summit of the Americas in

Quebec City) and anti-police brutality movements (specifically, the Annual March Against Police Brutality in Montreal). These events were chosen to epitomize the kinds of situations in which the aforementioned critiques are often trenchant,[6] and thus to highlight the significance of student coverage as *alternative*(s) to the mainstream.

One basic contention here is that while the student papers neither ignore nor endorse confrontational or destructive behaviour, they often emphasize the limited number of participants engaged in such behaviour and cast a more critical gaze towards police actions (including violence and mass arrests, sometime framed under the rubric of a worrying criminalization of dissent), better represent the concerns of movement constituents, and present a diversity of protester voices (e.g. personal accounts of experiences and motivations). In effect, the news framing (and sourcing) deployed by the *Link* and *Daily* often gives more (sympathetic) attention to movement-generated framing, and may be seen as *doing better journalism* by providing context (more 'thematic framing' which connects social conditions and power dynamics with the more 'episodic' aspects of events), more diverse representations, and attempts to facilitate understanding. At the beginning of the chapter, I seek to contextualize an otherwise more textual treatment by discussing the results of a quantitative study based on content analysis of sourcing, valence and other variables, revealing some notable differences between the coverage of selected protest events by the *Link* and *Daily* relative to that of the *Gazette*.

At the same time as I wish to emphasize the often decidedly 'alternative' treatment these protest events are given by the *Link* and the *Daily*, Chapter 6 also addresses the fact

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[6] The anti-globalization ('alter-globalization') movement is the focus of a significant number of critical academic studies which systematically establish problematic aspects of coverage in the mainstream (e.g. Adler and Mittleman 2004; Jha 2007; Rosie and Gorringe 2009; Leung 2010), and the Annual March Against Police Brutality, given the frequency of incidents of confrontation and property damage and the relatively lesser number of total participants (typically several hundred, perhaps 300-500 or slightly more), is, if anything, a case even more likely to focus on negative 'episodic' aspects of the event. It is my contention that the events thus present examples more likely to polarize coverage and highlight the particularity of the Link and Daily's accounts as 'alternative.'

that coverage of such events (as paroxysmal moments in social movement struggles, where political investments difficult to disentangle from the selection and tone of journalistic coverage, mainstream or alternative) draws out the tension, discussed at length in Chapter 5, between a more 'professional' journalistic role or orientation and an 'activist' one.

The former, typically predicated on some sort of commitment to or enactment of relative 'objectivity' or 'balance' in reporting, can be – especially in tense and politically charged situations such as these protest events – difficult to reconcile with more 'activist' commitments, yet the effort may well reveal this to be a productive tension. Discussion in Chapter 6, particularly that which draws on interviews with student journalists who attended the Summit of the Americas (though the theme is picked up also with respect to recent arrests of student journalists covering the Annual March Against Police Brutality), seeks to highlight student journalists' articulation of this tension, as well as focusing on how their coverage may be viewed as 'alternative.'

Ultimately, this thesis seeks to indicate how, in selected instances, student journalists maintain and negotiate an (often distinctly primary) identification with journalism (and, to some degree, with a more 'professional' orientation concerned with maintaining distance and 'balance,' if not objectivity – though 'mainstream' or 'professional' practices are often explicitly contested) at the same time that they seek to position themselves as 'alternative,' often taking up a marked 'activist' orientation. That is, through the pursuit of a number of distinct trails through the pages of (and in the reflections and recollections of editors from) the *Link* and *McGill Daily*, I seek to describe how these student newspapers (and student journalists) enact and represent their avowed commitments as a politically engaged press.

# Chapter One

## Student press in the academic literature:
## General overview

### *Introduction: the elision of the student press as a media outlet in its own right*

A key impetus for this work lies in the apparent dearth of scholarly work that directly addresses student print journalism at the University level as an object in itself from a standpoint of general social inquiry, and which considers student newspapers as media outlets in their own right (implying all of the complexity that this entails) as well as possible vectors and locations of visibility for activism associated with wider social movements and processes of social change. One recent survey of the sociology of Quebec's media scene (Pilon 2008) is perhaps more typical than aberrant in its omission of any mention of student media among the magazines, daily, weekly, community, alternative and ethnic print media enumerated. Surveys and discussions of 'mainstream' or large-circulation media surely cannot be expected to include student newspapers within their purview; however, key works dealing with what is typically referred to as 'community' or 'alternative' media (i.e. media which exists outside of the mainstream) do not typically discuss student print journalism (e.g. Rodriguez 2001; Atton 2002; Couldry and Curran 2003; Downing *et al* 2001; Howley 2005, 2010; Atton and Hamilton 2008; Bailey *et al* 2008; Hamilton 2008).[7]

Rather, much of the relevant literature available in recent decades treats student newspapers either as source materials, providing citeable evidence of wider phenomena (e.g. changes in youth and student identities, emerging social movements) or, alternately, has focused narrowly on administrative, legal or pedagogical perspectives (largely in the

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[7] One rare exception to the student press's elision in general works about alternative media internationally can be found – in passing – in Nigel Fountain's history of the London alternative press in the late 1960s and early 1970s, where he notes that the *Student*, Edinburgh University's student newspaper, furnished that scene with important figures John Lloyd (later editor of the *New Statesman*) and Anna Coote, who both worked on the underground publication *Ink* in the 1970s.

United States, where a focus on issues of censorship, First Amendment rights, and best practices in context where faculty advisors and university administrations exercise some degree of direct leverage over papers). The latter are often – with some exceptions – minimally relevant to a more general consideration of the mission, role and practices of the student press in the context of legally and (largely) operationally autonomous student papers incorporated via the types of arrangements typified by the *Link* and the *McGill Daily*. Between the inevitable elision of the particular practices associated with a given publication in works which treat student newspapers mainly as a matter of historical record, the ghettoization of the topic within specialized administrative/legal (and typically American) perspective, and its more general exclusion from works on (alternative and/or community) media, the student newspaper as a dynamic entity in itself has not been well addressed.

This is not to say that student newspapers have not been a rich source of viewpoints and information regarding the moments in time at which they have been produced; as a source, they have shaped work in several disciplines concerned with social inquiry, particularly work which addresses the manifold social movements and manifestations of protest of the 1960s and 70s. In the history and sociology of student identity and social movements, for example, and taking solely the Quebec case as an illustrative example, works such as Neatby's (1997) *Carabins ou activistes?: l'idéalisme et la radicalisation de la pensée étudiante à l'Université de Montréal au temps du duplessisme*, Hebert's (2008) *Impatient d'etre soi-meme: les etudiants montrealais, 1895-1960*, Warren's (2008) *Une douce anarchie: les années 68 au Québec* all draw liberally upon material from student publications such as *le Quartier Latin, La Carabin, The Georgian* and *The McGill Daily* – as do many others (e.g. Sheppard 1989; Mills 2007). Clearly, student newspapers are not neglected, at least in this respect, though works which delve more deeply into the internal

dynamics of student publications and the normative orientations of student journalists themselves are few and far between.

Some authors do go farther than this, and it is possible to find references to student journalism which elaborate connections with broader discussions of alternative media or which give student newspapers a particularly prominent place in the genesis of wider movements. Debien (2007), for example, mentions the 19th century birth of student journalism in Quebec's classical colleges, and much more importantly, its instantiantion in the monthly publications of *Jeunesse Etudiante Catholique* (JEC) from 1937 and the subsequent establishment of an association of francophone Catholic student journalists (the *Corporation des escholiers griffoneurs*, later to morph into the *Presses etudiante nationale*, or PEN, which dissolved in 1967) in 1946, as key developments in the eventual genesis of the student unrest of the late 1960s in Quebec. He notes that the number of member papers in the association rose from 29 in 1943 to 60 in 1954 and nearly 100 in 1963, and his analysis implies that the institutional support and guidance in practices associated with professional journalism provided through workshops and support services may have played into important mid-1960s conflicts over the freedom of the student press which, along with demands for representation in decision-making at the institutional level and reform to the system of education in general, presaged the more sweeping scope of later interventions and manifestations culminating in the CEGEP strikes and generalized unrest of October 1968 (see Warren 2008).[8] Notwithstanding the students who once reproached the editorial staffs of papers such as *La Carabin* for "valorizing 'atheistic socialist ideas of a Marxist tendency'" (Debien 2007: 84, *my translation*), it appears that some interpretations lend

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[8] The Canadian University Press (CUP) may arguably have assisted in a similar capacity in English Canada; certainly, by the mid-to-late 1960s, CUP had taken on a role leading and encouraging its members to view the student press as an 'agent of social change' (see Lemon 2004, discussed below).

weight to the contention that student journalism can be an important component of challenge and social change.

This interpretation of the importance of student newspapers seems to be supported in some measure by the fact that, in certain cases, prominent movement figures were heavily implicated in the student press. Louise Harel,[9] for example, had been editor of the College Sainte-Therese *Theresien* (Warren 2008: 74). Indeed, the more general point that student journalists often go on to prominent positions in public life is itself worthy of note. A listing of prominent figures once involved in the student press in Quebec, irrespective of linguistic boundaries, would have to include acclaimed writer and journalist Michel Beaulieu, social justice activist and feminist Judy Rebick, one-time Maoist, CSN organizer and later Bloc Quebecois leader Gilles Duceppe, human rights activist and Liberal MP Irwin Cotler, and many more; left-wing sympathies, however, are not universal, as such a list would be incomplete without neo-conservative Washington Post commentator Charles Krauthammer and others. The list of journalists (more and less) well known in Montreal, Quebec, Ottawa, Toronto and beyond is too long to include here.[10]

Marc Raboy (1984) makes a rare mention of the student press in connection with wider questions of alternative media's role in social change. As he suggests, perhaps most notable among student newspapers in the Quebec context for its clear connection with an extra-institutional audience and militant leftist politics would be the *Quartier Latin*, the Université de Montréal student publication which from 1969-1971 sought to reach out to a rising youth movement and labour constituency beyond the campus at the north-western slope of Mount Royal. In terms of distribution, at least, it had striking success, printing and distributing 30,000 copies bi-weekly and appealing predominantly to a counter-culturally

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[9] Vice-president of the *Union générale des étudiants du Québec* (UGEQ) in 1968, Harel was a key figure in the student movement at the time, as well as a prominent member of the Parti Quebecois and recently a challenger in Montreal municipal politics.
[10] For a partial list, see Appendix 1.

oriented audience, including many young people who consciously chose to evade the structure of university life. One-time editors later became involved with projects such as the Agence de presse libre du Quebec and *Le Temps Fou*, later attempts at fostering alternative, left social movement-friendly media voices in Quebec.[11] Pertinently to my contention that student newspapers are rarely addressed, although he acknowledges the *Quartier Latin*'s importance, this discussion appears in the context of an appendix labeled "Conscious Omissions" in Raboy's important book, *Movements and Messages: Media and Radical Politics in Quebec* (1984: 103-4). The *McGill Daily* is similarly noted in the same appendix as a publication associated with "pockets of resistance" in the Anglophone milieu at a time when English-language media in Quebec were by and large conservative in orientation (108). Clearly, some room for elaboration exists.

### Key exceptions: Notable discussions of the Canadian student press in its own right, and in connection with activism and social movements

As the above examples suggest, much of the work that does address the student press (however indirectly, or however consciously elided) focuses on the 1960s (and early 1970s) in particular. This is not without some justification. The significance of student activism and unrest during the 1960s, and of the accompanying currents of social change affecting

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[11] One can also note US examples of counter-cultural/alternative press emerging, with University funding (for some time, at least), in the 1960s. *The Paper* was founded in 1965, with the financial assistance of the University of Michigan, by students looking to counter what the projects' initiator, Michael Kindman, saw as a stifling intellectual environment and (by one chronicler's account) "a stodgy journalism curriculum and student newspaper" at the school (Streitmatter 2001: 203).

In Canada, *The Last Post*, a national publication founded by "a group of disillusioned mainstream journalists who were imbued with the excitement and passion of the late 1960s political scene in Montreal, and who felt frustrated in trying to break with their employers' conventional restraints" (Rosner 2008: 74), also made an impact in focusing on issues not covered elsewhere. Then-recent McGill Daily editor Mark Starowicz was a key player. Topics at the *Last Post* included militarization and Canadian research into chemical and biological weaponry, the exploitative practices (and government complicity) connected to Canadian resource companies, and the question of Quebec sovereignty – a topic on which, along with the Canadian University Press (see Lemon 2004: Ch. 2), the *Last Post* became a major point of dissemination for alternative information at the time of the 1970 October Crisis, when papers such as the *Montreal Star* would quash stories with the in-house line that they did not square with 'the powers that be' (Rosner 2008: 74-78).

individual and collective exercises of youth autonomy (and views towards authority and subjectivity generally), vis-à-vis the student press cannot be easily underestimated. Many of the essential problematics that persist for contemporary student newspapers like the *Daily* and the *Link* are derived from issues and conflicts that came to a head in the late 1960s. In seeking to outline some of these key problematics, it is particularly helpful to examine the survey of the University-based student press in Canada produced ca. 1969 by Sullivan (1976) for the Senate Special Committee on Mass Media.

Sullivan notes that student newspapers vary depending on context, asserting that "the singular factor influencing the nature of each publication [is] the personality, experience, and political and journalistic goals of its editor-in-chief" (241). She characterized the Canadian campus press on the whole as "a dynamic press, a vibrant press, a press which is readily open to change, new techniques, and 'radical' content [...] not a press easily appreciated by a stultified middle class, conditioned by and for the tamer fare of daily and weekly newspapers" (ibid). The student press of 1969 is also characterized, however, as "often anti-intellectual," interested in defending the image of the student, and valorizing (even defining) the goals of student activists, against their presentation in the mainstream. A strong sense of newly differentiated, defiant and fiercely independent (activist) student identity is evoked, an identity with an image problem that she attributes to a "misunderstanding" stemming from a "retreat into a new jargon on the part of student activists" (ibid: 242). The two main functions of the 'dynamic' student press of the period are described in its efforts both to reflect the thinking of the 'student community' and to provide leadership in shifting its focus from the parochial world of the campus to the world at large. In contrast to its incarnations in the 1950s, described as "a soft, unconcerned medium, self-satisfied [...] not thoughtless – just complacent," the student press of the later 60s was much more militant.

Sullivan locates the historical pivot-point in 1962-63, at which time a "search for identity" under the influence of American popular literature, the "shock" of the Cuban missile crisis, and growing engagement with the US civil rights movement and the situation in Rhodesia, prompted a burgeoning peace movement to merge with movements questioning the validity of the 'in loco parentis' tradition, asking for representation in university governance and forwarding an institutional critique of a university becoming a "factory for people 'trained for jobs'" (243). The larger movement was soon to reframe their requests as demands. Identification as one among a variety of oppressed groups generated attempts at solidarity-building and encouraged militant struggle.

Key developments in this context, enumerated by Sullivan, include attempts to reach beyond campus boundaries with politically-charged 'community newspapers' (as in the case of the *Quartier Latin*, but also of the University of Waterloo *Chevron*) aimed at education and the provision of 'mobilizing information,' the rise of 'non-objective reporting' (at papers disdainful of the 'myth of objectivity,' beginning with the *Chevron* in 1967 and coming to include the *Ubyssey, the McGill Daily*, and the *Carillon*), financial growth (largely premised on advertising revenue), and the growth of radicalism. 'Non-objective reporting' in this scenario consists in the idea that papers would 'identify' (in a published statement to readers) a collective editorial bias (for example, in opposing the oppression of minorities and the domination of bourgeois capital), and that news would be written (and presumably read) with such a bias in mind. Of course, this was not a universally accepted practice; only five papers are named by Sullivan, and statements by other editors that disparaged the method as "inviting the production of propaganda sheets" or encouraging the propagation of an in-group dynamic of insular and inaccessible ideas and jokes are noted (ibid: 244-245; 264). In describing student press 'radicalism', she notes the influence of Marx and Marcuse (somewhat dismissively) as well as of SDS-branded American ideas and "a genuine and

humanistic hatred and fear of war and its manifestations." *McGill Daily* editor Mark Wilson

is quoted at length on the normative ideals of a 'radical' student press:

> We try to give our readers the information they need to equip themselves to cope
> with the world, under the slogan "Information is Power" and "Power to the People."
> We also think that most of our readers have, fairly close to the surface, impulses in
> favour of a society where they and everybody else can develop and realize their full
> human potential and we try to pass on tips as to what must be done in order to
> bring this about. Those with a vested interest in monopoly capitalism in any or all of
> its aspects, and their apologists, seem to become very agitated at this (ibid: 247).

As well as making reference to innovations in form, such as the use of a tabloid – rather

than broadsheet – format, and some papers' emphasis on feature-type content rather than

'hard news' (265), the report also outlines a series of conflicts and conundrums in the

relationship of the student press to other entities in its institutional surrounds. At the time,

for most student newspapers, the student union was officially the 'publisher' of the paper,

and therefore in a position to extract consequences from editors with whom it was

extremely displeased – as was the case for David Bowman, editor of the *Georgian* at the time

of the 1969 computer centre occupation occupation at Sir George Williams University by

students protesting perceived racial discrimination (see Martel 2006).[12] Bowman had

invited the West Indian Student Association to take control of an 'extra' edition to voice

their concerns, and an extra expense was incurred to produce these issues. This expense

proved the ostensible basis for student council's dismissal of the offending editor of a paper

that had already raised ire with its 'radicalism' (Sullivan 1976: 259-260).

Conflicts with administration are also mentioned, and described as driven often "not by

what is said, but how it is said" (ibid: 261). Issues of 'obscenity' (e.g. the use of foul language

or publication of material such as the famous "Student as Nigger" article by Jerry Farber)

form the basis for a number of cases in which administrations intervened to remove editors

or alter the course of a given publication (ibid: 262). In some cases, as Lexier (2004)

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[12] The 'Sir George Williams Affair,' as described retrospectively by the Link 2000-2010, is discussed
further in Chapter 3 in light of student journalists' reflections on these events.

recounts, crises inflected by the intervention of administrators in student newspaper activities catalyzed protest. Such interventions, coupled with a strong commitment to ideals of a 'free press,' ultimately steered a number of papers to seek – and often gain, if only after years of effort – legal autonomy from both student unions and administration, as has been the case at the *Daily* since 1980 and the *Link* since 1986. Notwithstanding such developments, the general issues concerning the stance of the student press and the possibility of conflict remain with us – and will be further explored in the contemporary context later in this thesis.

Other reports from the US in the period immediately preceding and following Sullivan's, especially on the part of university administrators and journalism educators, indicate attempts to grapple with the same trends. Writing in 1958 (reprinted in Ensin and Sanderson 1966), Wilcox suggests that the "already routine" conflicts between administrators and student newspapers over "the rather vague areas of 'freedom of the press' and 'academic freedom'" (ibid: 2) result from a confused notion of the nature of the university community and purposes of the student press that pitted editorial staff, administration and student unions against one another. Rivers and Sellers (1971: n.p.) suggest that "[t]he 1970s may one day be considered the period of independence for the college press," and describe an increasing move towards the severing of ties between publications and their host institutions – sometimes spurred by the institutions themselves, eager to divest themselves of the rabble-rousing papers.

Duscha and Fisher (1973: 13-18) note three forms of institutional operation for a campus newspaper: direct control by the institution, an 'amorphous situation' in which it is "published by a publications board or student governing body, and financed at least in part with funds from the university or from a compulsory student activity fee," or "true independence" in which it operates without any direction or funding through institutional

mechanisms. I should note here that the *Link* and *Daily* benefit from funding, but minimal direction, through institutional university mechanisms, with a publications board and mandatory fee levy (which may be voted on in student referenda, but which is collected through the university), but with editorial and administrative autonomy as an independently incorporated entity. On the question of controversies over content and attitudes, Duscha and Fischer echo Sullivan in suggesting that:

> it was not the war in Vietnam or black militancy in the 1960s that caused most problems for student editors and administrators dealing with the college and university press. Rather, it was language and changing student mores, including vigorous advocacy and editorial treatment of the news" (ibid: 22).

As this brings us back to the subject of 'non-objective reporting,' (heretofore discussed in connection with the 'declared bias' approach) it is worth noting connections not only with what sometimes sound in Sullivan's account to be rather straightforward matters of political positioning (though she does note the question of a 'new' language of campus activism), but also with literary and journalistic transformations that eventually percolated even into more mainstream journalistic settings. By 1977, the so-called 'new journalism' had even made its way into textbooks aimed at student journalists (those who had not 'experimented' on their own), seeking to impart the techniques of Wolfe and Mailer – centered around the idea that 'subjective truths' can be revealed by "a different way of seeing the world" in which "[i]t is what goes on *inside* each of us that is real, the world of our own internal experiences" (Webb 1977: 32-33). Although this type of 'non-objective' rationale is not exactly that evoked in Sullivan's report, it is part of the global ecology of writing (especially in the context of feature-writing) which shifted around the moment of the New Left, and which plays into the conditions for a profoundly changed view of 'objectivity' in journalism. Of course, as Duscha and Fischer (1973) note, this occurred in parallel with (if slightly ahead of) a change in norms in a great deal of the mass-circulation press that quickly normalized the printing of "four letter words and other uses of language

and imagery" that were only recently "the principal concern of regents, critics, administrators, faculty members, and other critics of the student newspapers" (22-23).

The inclination to challenge standards of propriety remains vibrant in some sectors of the student press to this day.[13] Still, this aside is intended less to deflect attention from the fact that 'serious reporting' was changing simultaneously in the 1960s and 1970s – with no small spark from the political inclinations of student journalists and younger professional reporters – than to note that stylistic and subjective transformation is clearly important as well. On more 'serious' terrain, Rosner (2008: 72) suggests that "young people were usually in the forefront," and that "some initial forays into investigative journalism" in campus papers (along with other 'alternative' ventures such as the *Last Post*) helped pave the way for an invigorated investigative or 'muckraking' role for the press in Canada:

> Alternative magazines and newspapers, many run by students and left-wing organizations in the 1960s, produced some probing work. In the US, *Ramparts* was particularly influential. In Canada, *Dimension*, the *4th Estate* and *The Last Post* offered similar examples. Political groups ran investigative articles in their own publications. Soon the mainstream was paying attention. By the early 1970s, it was becoming fashionable in many mainstream organizations to form teams to engage in muckraking (Rosner 2009: n.p.).

Taking off along the same trajectory as Sullivan's study, though continuing to chart the territory of change in student journalism in Canada up to the early 1990s, is Kathe Lemon's (2004) work, *Agents of social change: a history of Canadian University Press*, which primarily addresses the question of whether and how the association of Canadian university newspapers sought, over time, to act on the "agent of social change" clause introduced to the organization's Charter of the Student Press (later the 'Statement of Principles') in 1965. The clause, notably for this study, was championed in a discussion paper forwarded by the *McGill Daily*, the *Georgian* and the *Loyola News* (the latter two forerunners of the *Link*), and stated that "one of the major roles of the student press is to act as an agent of social change;

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[13] See, for example, Reimold (2008) on sex writing in the student press in recent years.

that it should continually strive to emphasize the rights and responsibilities of the student as citizen, and use its freedom from commercial control to examine issues that the professional press avoids" (cited in Lemon 2004: 1). In the decades following the consolidation of CUP in 1959 (when a more cohesive institutional structure revamped the organization, originally founded in 1938), the organization saw significant success in instituting the first national student press wire-service, in advocating for institutional autonomy for member papers, and in securing financial flows for student journalism via advertising co-operatives, first with the Youthstream co-operative, then in 1980 with its own agency, Campus Plus – though the formation of the latter coincided with an exodus of members and ushered in a period of difficult transition (ibid: 132).

The 'agent of social change' clause in effect formed a codified and institutionalized basis for the kind of 'non-objective reporting' discussed by Sullivan. Lemon writes of a 'great objectivity debate,' in which CUP replaced the term 'unbiased' with 'fair' in its guidelines for member papers' activities outlined in the Code of Ethics (ibid: 32-33), and the political mission set out by the clause underwent various interpretations over the decades that followed its adoption. Again echoing Sullivan, Lemon (ibid: 35) suggests that, "what changed for CUP members [already committed to 'freedom of the press'] in the 1960s was a re-conceptualization of what the student community was, who students were, and what they were capable of." Notably, the ethos behind the clause could be said to inform the CUP national office's role in disseminating sympathetic accounts of the FLQ and its goals in 1970 (when the organization was seen to be marginalized and demonized by English-language Canadian press), CUP's seeking the exclusion of advertising employing sexist portrayals of women or from corporations associated with apartheid South Africa and maintaining an advertising boycott list (a practice shared by some member papers, including the *Link* and *Daily*, to this day), encouraging support for gay and lesbian communities (e.g. through the

production of 'special issues' sympathetically identifying concerns associated with such groups), and making internal efforts to address gender issues (for example, by adopting a women's speaking list to ensure a voice at CUP conferences and striking a special committee on women's issues to give attention to feminist perspectives).

Over time, however, perspectives changed, and by the early 1990s, some members saw CUP, iconically identified with provisions such as the 'agent of social change' clause, as "stuck in the sixties, a reactionary dinosaur in a new political world [...] hopelessly political in both its actions and its coverage" (ibid: 130). In 1991 and 1992, the clause was removed from the organization's Statement of Principles and Statement of Purposes. Others still maintained the clause's ethos, and conversely viewed its controversial status as indicative of a key tension among members, and its antagonists as more concerned with financial issues and the exigencies of production than with any deeper purpose. Lemon (ibid) suggests that CUP may be seen in this respect as "a victim of its own success," having successfully promoted ideals of autonomy for member papers to such an extent that many chafed at the idea of taking direction from CUP itself, and viewed the association mainly in terms of a service model, regardless of its officially co-operative status. Indeed, the loss of members following the 1980 change in advertising arrangements and subsequent developments, including the anomie of what had previously been a more cohesively identified campus community and "growing conservatism on the campuses" (133), spurred some to argue that attracting more members (an institutional priority) required the removal of the clause and the tempering of the ethos it codified. It was replaced with wording indicating that "the Student press in Canada has a vital social role" (cited in Lemon 2004: 136). By one account, the student press in Canada, on balance, increasingly moved

towards a more 'mainstream,' less politically assertive or left-leaning model through the 1980s (Thu Than Ha,[14] cited in Lemon 2004: 147).

Whereas previous generations had viewed activism and journalism as compatible, by the early 1990s many made a strong distinction between the two roles – and the 1992 Code of Ethics came to emphasize a preoccupation with credibility (ibid: 137; 143). Again, the issue of 'objectivity' (along with its more pliant stand-in, 'fairness') was raised, with a delegate from the *McGill Daily* suggesting in 1992 that "bringing up the word 'objectivity' [was] kind of misleading and lying about what [student newspapers do]" (cited in Lemon 2004: 144); although the 'agent of social change clause' was unable to garner enough support to be retained, this claim was conceded, and the Code of Ethics written to reflect the inevitable social positioning and necessary bias of individual journalists. Despite such concessions, Lemon's view is that the major shift at this time was towards a view of CUP as a reflection of concerns related to the projection of an increasingly professionalized and relatively more politically ambivalent (if not agnostic or neutral) image of itself and its membership (ibid: 147-148).

From the early 2000s, however, there is evidence of moves to bolster official recognition (and organizational structures supporting) the politically engaged vision of CUP.[15] I should note that at the time of Lemon's writing, according to her account (ibid: 148), a motion to re-institute a clause in the CUP constitution asserting "that the role of the student press was to act as an agent of social change," proposed by the *Link* and *Daily*, had just been defeated (at the 2004 annual conference); since then, in 2005, provisions which echo (though not precisely replicating) a similar rhetoric of strong social engagement were added (as a preamble to the Statement of Principles, emphasizing this point) as part of a

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[14] Former CUP national features writer and *Link* editor in the 1980s.
[15] Indeed, Lemon (2004: 148) suggests that the idea, and even the use of the phrase among CUP members, had never really disappeared.

refit of the organization's constitution, in significant part due to the efforts of representatives of the *McGill Daily* and the *Link* (in concert with others, including the University of Victoria's *Martlet*).[16] The preamble reads as follows:

> Canadian University Press recognizes that its members are charged with representing their communities, providing information to help people understand themselves in relation to the outside world. They also have a responsibility to aid in developing a voice to groups that have been marginalized or denied power in Canadian society and the global community, thereby doing their part to confront injustice. With this in our minds, we embrace the following Defining Principles, using them to guide our journalistic pursuits.[17]

Both the *Daily* and the *Link*, as discussed in Chapters 3 and 5, have provisions in their guiding documents that parallel this sentiment, and have at times served to strongly support the promotion of such goals and ideals for the student press, at home and at CUP.

As well as taking up Lemon's general question, "what is student journalism for?" (2004: 149),[18] and the analysis of what it means to be a socially and politically engaged press, this thesis will seek to extend Lemon's work by noting efforts on the part of the *Link* and *Daily* which emphasize a role resonant with the ethos behind 'agent of social change' at CUP. More generally, the questions of interpretation related to statements such as the 'agent of social change' clause (and its successors), concerns with professionalization, and of changing and negotiated normative orientations towards the practice and goals of student journalism transpose easily onto the level of individual papers. Surely the changes described have their analogues in individual cases, such as those of the *Link* and the *Daily*, though these papers have traditionally been in the less conservative camp with respect to the ideological divide in CUP; it is the aim of this thesis to investigate how such issues play out today.

Both Sullivan (1976) and Lemon (2004) signal that the student press may be viewed as an important indicator and potential vector in the context of the student movements and

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[16] See Chapter 3 for discussion of this and the two papers' progressive efforts at CUP more generally.
[17] CUP 68 Delegate Binder, January 2006: 99-100.
[18] Incidentally, also the title of a comment piece written by Daily coordinating editor, Daniel Cohen, who was particularly involved in the aforementioned efforts, following the 2005 CUP conference:
Cohen, Daniel. "So what is student journalism for?" *McGill Daily*, 27/1/2005: 6.

associated political contention arising out of the 1960s. Lemon further extends the analysis, in her history of CUP, to consider the ways in which this plays out in practice, and the modifications made to officially sanctioned codifications of the place of the student press in context of larger social transformations. Indeed, in the history of CUP and in Sullivan's account of the dual reflection/leadership role of some elements of the student press ca. 1969, it is possible to see some parallels with Debien's claims about the importance of the PEN and its JEC-associated precursors in the Quebec context, though the later history of CUP appears to show a decisive move away from such a role.

Some other recent academic works present case histories of particular college or university newspapers (e.g. Alison 2004 or Basolo 2008 in the United States), though their long view and focus on parochial events – particularly given that I am aware of no such study in Canada or Quebec – makes them of limited use for present purposes. Also focusing on individual publications, and of more interest here, are retrospective essay collections (including archival excerpts) such as *The Martlet: Fifty years of Newspaper (R)evolution* (Bar-On 1998) and *Back Issues: 80 Years of the Ubyssey Student Newspaper* (Clark 1998). These latter provide some of the only non-archival sources for relevant information on matters of prominence in the Canadian student press (and their significance to student journalists), beyond simply inferring from the general literature on social movements and campus activism. To my knowledge, no such retrospectives have been published chronicling the *Link* or the *McGill Daily.*

Although examples from other universities are by no means necessarily representative of what one might expect to find at the *Link* and *Daily*, firsthand accounts of motivation and reflections on the role of student journalist that appear in these volumes are evocative. Speaking of the 1960s, one former *Ubyssey* editor states, "I got hooked on shaping information to make it an attractive commodity, to provoke debate, to ignite community

action. What could ever be as interesting?" (Valpy, in Clark 1998: 49). Others insist on the importance of camaraderie, the pride of seeing one's name in print (or of producing stories which rival in depth or offer alternative perspectives to 'mainstream' offerings), political conviction, or love of art, humor, or the thrill of investigative endeavors. Broadly, these works present a record that establishes, at least for their particular cases, timelines of continuity and change through the selection of prominent topics, the publication of excerpts, and the compilation of retrospective essays by former and current student journalists.

If the *Ubyssey* and the *Martlet* can be taken as illustrative examples, at least, it seems that the role of 'agent of social change' has been recurrent, if not consistent. Aside from noting the occasional cynicism (especially, it would seem, of politically convinced student journalists) and less actively leftist tone of student concerns in the late 1970s and 1980s, these accounts note the rise of unease with campus corporatization (i.e. the branding and commodification of public/educational spaces and on-campus services, and the increasingly 'businesslike' administration of the university), identity politics (which diversified significantly from the late 1960s, arguably dissolving much of the 'new' student identity Sullivan describes), and even, for the *Ubyssey*, the seeds of the so-called 'anti-globalization' movement in the APEC protest of 1997. In this way, it is possible to set the stage for the decade following the year 2000. Comparison also reinforces the point that individual publications have different trajectories; relatively 'activist' in the early 1990s when the 'agent of social change' clause was removed from CUP's guiding documents (and having seconded the motion to add the preamble to Statement of Principles just noted, emphasizing CUPs social-political role), the *Martlet's* editor-in-chief wrote in 1998 that "the *Martlet* is evolving into a more professional animal, a 'real' newspaper, and our role as an agent of activism is on the decline" (Vallis, in Bar-On 1998: viii).

Regardless of individual moments and trajectories (potentially quick to change in the high-turnover scenario of a student newspaper) it seems clear that, in many cases, student journalism in Canada over the past several decades has often tended to be overtly political; the evidence presented by Sullivan, Lemon, Bar-On, and Clark chronicles, in various ways, this tendency (and its periods of dormancy, decline or vulnerability). Each account highlights conceptual issues and provides examples of specific incidents and activist concerns relevant to the student press in Canada in the past 50 years. All of this is especially significant in that the present work is primarily concerned with the question of whether the *The Link* and *The McGill Daily* (as individual case studies in the student press in Canada) manifest an overtly political focus, how the possibility of an activist or advocacy role is played out in the work and ideas of the student journalists themselves, and how the respective papers' engagements and interventions in 'contentious politics' relate to a more 'professional' orientation towards journalism. In what sense might student newspapers act as 'alternative media,' and how might the practice and reflections of student journalists complicate this question? Questions derived from the discussion here, as well as from the more general examination of the literature on journalism, media and social movements presented in Chapter 2, form a conceptual core for the remainder of this thesis.

Also notable for its treatment of the student press as an object in itself, in connection with wider social dynamics, is the recent work of Wozniak (2007), which though mainly consisting in a survey directed towards obtaining data about reader expectations and preferences regarding the *Excalibur* at York University, offers some useful points to consider – though in a less historical vein than has heretofore been the focus. Wozniak's analysis of the survey of contemporary students conducted at York foregrounds popular agreement with, and interest in the idea of a student newspaper as a forum for discussion and debate, and emphasizes the need to address issues of relevance to a diverse university

'community,' and to thereby create an 'alternative public sphere' which fosters the dialogue and public representations of connection which can work towards the symbolic construction of community (ibid: 82-87). Wozniak draws explicitly on theoretical frameworks concerned with the notion of 'alternative media' (e.g. Downing et al 2001; Rodriguez 2001), as does Lemon in her conclusions (2004: 158-159), though there is a powerful tension here between some of the more anarchist- and subaltern-inspired connotations of that body of theory (especially Downing 2001) and Wozniak's normative and practical recommendations that student newspapers seek to "unite the student body" (2007: 86). Though she does suggest that "student editors should shift their focus to new and innovative ways of presenting information and structuring newspapers and away from working to mirror or mimic the professional press" (ibid.), the focus on unity highlights an inherent tension between the possibility of media 'alterity' or 'alternativeness' and the kind of broad appeal that characterizes efforts to appeal to an undifferentiated (student) public.

Optimistically, Wozniak suggests that by "publishing articles that reflect student interests and thus spark 'talk,' the student press will naturally be created into a community" (ibid: 86-87) and that "student newspapers should run stories that are both relevant and important to students while pushing the envelope and challenging assumptions" (ibid: 89). Despite (or perhaps because of) the limitations of this analysis, important issues are foregrounded at the theoretical level: the imperative to differentiation or distinction (moving away from mirroring the mainstream press), the potential desirability of 'alternative' media (and the 'alternative public sphere'), the problem of catering to a diverse and often divided 'community' of students that may not identify primarily (or even to any significant degree) in this capacity, and the tensions between popularization (attracting readership by printing stories 'that reflect students interests') and 'pushing the envelope,'

or between 'building community' ('naturally' or otherwise) and fostering debate or playing an educational or activist role.

## Conclusions

Given the lacuna in the existing literature regarding the student press in Canada (though some of the few exceptions, such as Lemon 2004, are highly informative), and the growing interest in 'alternative media' and in reconsiderations of the social role of journalism, it is well worth examining both past and present instantiations of student newspapers like the *Link* and *Daily*. The history of CUP's self-identification as an 'agent of social change,' and the legacy of both radicalism and political retrenchment in that organization and the student press more generally (not to mention the specific issues, from divestment in Apartheid South Africa to the commercialization of space and services on campus, raised by existing efforts to map the history of student newspapers in Canada) indicates a broader connection with social movements and social change. It also indicates an ongoing struggle to negotiate the place of student newspapers as both a form of journalism (with ties to 'mainstream' or professional practice and normative orientations) and – for some – a form of political action. The two do not always sit well with one another, and the tensions within CUP, and between administrators, student unions and their respective student papers demonstrate the larger importance of such negotiations for those who share an institutional context with student journalists, and the relationship between the microcosm of the student paper and the larger socio-cultural context.

In addition to the internal dynamics (and tensions) of, and the institutional reactions elicited by, student journalism, student newspapers which do retain some of the ethos (and, indeed, the kind of language) recalled by the era exemplified by CUP's "agent of social change" clause, efforts to reach off-campus, and close involvement in contentious episodes

such as the Sir George Williams affair, student newspapers offer a lens towards the social-political mood and concerns of their time. Papers such as the *Link* and the *McGill Daily*, examined in this thesis, are both important examples of contemporary (alternative?) media outlets that deserve to be examined in their own right, and as mediators of social movement and activist messages and actions for student publics – and thus, excellent sites in which to examine a range of questions concerning journalism, activism, and alternative media.

# CHAPTER TWO

## Theoretical background (1) and methodology (2):
## The (contested) journalistic field, social movements and alternative media

### 1.

*Theoretical background: introduction*

In addition to the survey of literature pertaining to the student press already set out, it is necessary to locate this project in relation to some key perspectives and debates that have emerged in recent decades as many have sought to theorize the place of media and journalism in contemporary societies. This section seeks to perform such a task in relation to social movements, activism and the possibility of 'alternative media,' concluding with a view of student journalism as potentially occupying a 'liminal' position.

This requires three major areas of theoretical consideration: an attempt to theorize the field of journalism itself (particularly in relation to a general sociology of media which draws on the work of Bourdieu), an account of prominent critical views which hold that 'mainstream' media often prove problematic vis-à-vis contemporary social movements and activism (though media coverage is vital to their aims), and a discussion of 'alternative media' as conceptualized in recent work. Subsequent to touching on these points, I seek to correct for the high level of abstraction – and predominantly negative impression of mainstream journalism – by discussing some approaches from Communications and Journalism Studies which emphasize the fact that journalism (as a loosely defined 'interpretive community' (Zelizer 1993) that seeks to define its own field of operations, potentially distinguished from a 'news industry' which may pose constraints exacerbating negative effects) presents not only 'conservatizing pressures' but also 'openings' for progressive social change (Caroll and Hackett 2006: 24).

This review of the literature sets the stage for the work that follows by introducing a

variety of perspectives that stand as background for this study of student journalism and its status as a site for critical coverage (including criticism of the mainstream media itself) and the mediation and refraction of social movement messages. The ideas laid out here should assist (as outlined in the final section of Part 1 in this chapter) in considering student journalism at the *Link* and *McGill Daily* as both a potential form of 'alternative media' and as a form of journalism, inevitably hybrid – taking from the traditions of mainstream journalism and sharing to some extent in its practices and ideals, though persisting in decidedly different circumstances, and frequently challenging the priorities, presentation and performance of the mainstream as it negotiates its own position and practices.

### The journalistic field: Bourdieu, 'regimes of objectivity' and mainstream media

As Zelizer (2004) points out, academic interest in journalism spans many disciplines, generating a series of relatively distinct definitional sets that have prompted diverse scholarly examinations of journalism *as a profession, as an institution, as text, as people*, and *as a set of practices.* These sets each have "strong points and points of neglect," and "no one definitional set is capable of conveying all there is about journalism" (43). In the interest of avoiding an overly constrained view of the people, practices and institutional, intertextual and (proto- or perhaps anti-) professional context of a journalistic enterprise – i.e. the student newspapers examined here – I draw on a variety of perspectives related to 'alternative media' (and its typically hybrid instantiations), to the sociology of media, and to journalism and 'news' in relation to social movements, activism and protest.

Not only do analyses derived from traditions in the social sciences and humanities provide useful lenses towards journalism and fora for discussion, but journalism itself may well have things to say to those disciplines which look towards it – not least in terms of ideals of timeliness (or contemporaneity), accessibility and relevance (see Rabinow *et al*

2008: *Dialogue IV*). While this is not to suggest simple deference towards journalistic subject(s), it is indeed worth considering topics which raise certain affinities and disjunctures between academia and contemporary (student) journalism, and I will try to keep my analysis timely and oriented towards issues which are relevant to a changing social and journalistic context (not only activist issues implicated in coverage, or the normative orientations of practitioners, but also, for example, issues affecting the prospects for future employment which might obtain for student journalists). The state of disparate and sometimes contradictory scholarship on journalism, according to Zelizer, "calls for both a more vigorous integration of the various frames traditionally used to consider journalism and the use of such frames as active variables in shaping contemporary inquiry." The aim of such a perspective, one that I hope to articulate in my own way, is that "journalism's study might come to reflect more of journalism than of the academic world that observes it" (2004: 214).

In order to take up an analysis that tries to reflect the journalism of student newspapers fairly,[19] and to assess the possibility of considering the *Link* and *McGill Daily* as alternatives, it is useful first to situate (mainstream) journalism. While the first two sections of this chapter train a predominantly critical eye on the place of journalism in society, I will return to questions that reflect more on possible self-definitions and priorities relevant to the field of journalism (including possible positive 'openings') prior to concluding this chapter. Some recent calls for a return to the sociology of journalism, and interventions on behalf of the critical potential of certain key figures of contemporary sociology indicate, at least, that the social sciences do indeed offer useful perspectives from which to consider the question of the role and effects of journalism and the potential for 'alternative media.' Of particular interest in its potential to provide a conceptual framework for assessing the position of

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[19] However plastic such a notion might turn out to be.

(alternative) journalistic projects is the work of Pierre Bourdieu. Recent work (Bourdieu 1998; Benson 2005; Benson and Neveu 2005; Atton and Hamilton 2008) has connected Bourdieu's earlier writing, situating the 'field of cultural production' (Bourdieu 1993) in terms of a general sociology, with the specific concerns of those seeking to map the conditions of operation for contemporary journalism, both 'mainstream' and 'alternative'.

Pierre Bourdieu has famously employed the notion of 'field' (*champ*) to describe the various social sectors that have tended to proliferate and gain autonomy, however asymmetrically weighted in overall social influence, in the process of modernization. For Bourdieu:

> any social formation is structured by way of a hierarchically organized series of fields (the economic field, the educational field, the cultural field, etc.), each defined as a structured space with its own laws of functioning and its own relations of force independent of those of politics and the economy, except, obviously, in the case of the economic and political fields. Each field is relatively autonomous but structurally homologous with the others. Its structure, at any given moment, is determined by the relations between the positions agents occupy in the field. A field is a dynamic concept in that a change in agents' positions necessarily entails a change in the field's structure (Johnson 1993: 6).

Any given field may be described as stretching along a continuum between autonomous and heteronomous poles, with the prior defined primarily by internally articulated normative orientations and standards, and the latter defined primarily by pressures, standards or prerogatives that arise from outside of the field in question.

Aside from the influence of economic capital (and *social capital*, ties between individuals and groups connected by social networks), Bourdieu identifies *symbolic capital*, which "refers to degree of accumulated prestige, celebrity, consecration or honour and is founded on a dialectic of knowledge (*conaissance*) and recognition (*reconnaissance*)," and *cultural capital*, which "concerns forms of cultural knowledge, competences or dispositions [...] a form of knowledge, an internalized code or a cognitive acquisition which equips the social agent with empathy towards, appreciation for or competence in deciphering cultural relations and cultural artefacts" (ibid: 7). These two forms of capital (which can be

considered as "interests or resources" relevant to the field) can be considered particularly important for the media and/or journalistic fields (Carroll and Hackett 2006: 32). Entry into a particular field requires at least the potential to effectively acquire relevant cultural capital, a potentiality predisposed by means of the *habitus* (a set of relatively durable, but not unchangeable, dispositions which are inculcated primarily via socialization in the family and formal education, and which are therefore highly structured according to social class); success in a given field frequently entails the ability to cross-convert economic and cultural capital in ways that build up reserves of social and symbolic capital.

For Bourdieu, relations between actors in a given field are competitive, though not reducible to investments so simple as in rational-actor approaches:

> [Speaking] of a *field* of position-takings, we are insisting that what can be constituted as a *system* for the sake of analysis is not the product of a coherence-seeking intention or an objective consensus (even if it presupposes unconscious agreement on common principles) but the product and prize of a permanent conflict; or [...] that the generative, unifying principle of the 'system' is the struggle, with all the contradiction it engenders (so that participation in the struggle – which may be indicated objectively by, for example, the attacks that are suffered – can be used as the criterion establishing that a work belongs to the field of position-takings and the author to the field of positions) (Bourdieu 1993: 34).

Speaking as he is above of the fields of literature and art, it is not too much of a stretch to transpose his comments to that of journalism – perhaps much less so than to a field of 'media' as a whole. Commitment to the *field* and investment in the struggle which constitutes it indicates at some level a common *illusio* – a term Bourdieu employs to denote an "unconscious agreement on common principles" which maintains one's investment in the 'game' of that field as (subjectively perceived to be) intrinsically meaningful (see Bourdieu 1998). In each social field, actors and groups may be identified as participating in light of their engagements with others (taking positions within the field) and this shared *illusio*. Student journalists, for example, participate by the fact they identify journalistic exploits as important, their ideals and practices reference (positively or negatively) those of a larger field of journalism (what they do is a kind of journalism), and may actively engage

in struggle within that field – albeit from a somewhat marginal or *liminal* position[20] – both tacitly, by staking particular normative positions related to how (student) journalism should be practiced, and more explicitly in cases where mainstream media or particular journalists are subject to direct critique.[21]

Bourdieu's interest in class and culture has long implied an analysis of news media, but it is only in the 1990s that journalism as such acquired pride of place in his research; *On Television*, published in 1998, introduces English-speaking readers to an explicit conceptualization of a 'journalistic field'.[22] As Benson and Neveu (2005: 4) summarize a key example of heteronomous *vs.* autonomous influences on position-taking within the field, expressed by different forms of capital:

> Inside the journalistic field, economic capital is expressed via circulation, or
> advertising revenues, or audience ratings, whereas the "specific" cultural capital of
> the field takes the form of intelligent commentary, in-depth reporting, and the like –
> the kind of journalistic practices rewarded each year by the US Pulitzer Prizes.

However, contra the high ideals of a 'free press' associated with such 'specific' cultural capital, "[t]he journalistic field is seen as part of the field of power; that is, it tends to engage first and foremost those agents who possess high volumes of capital" (ibid: 5). It is "weakly autonomous" overall, meaning that it is highly influenced by the force exerted by other fields (particularly the economic and political fields, but also by science and the fields of cultural production) – though it is nonetheless at the same time, "a microcosm within the macrocosm – it obeys 'its own laws, it own nomos' " (ibid).

As with any other field, journalism is defined according to the complex of historically defined circumstances in which relations between different fields are continually

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[20] See page 83.
[21] See Chapter 4 for several examples of such explicit criticism; it is my contention that a more tacit or implicit critique – though clearly a position-taking in the field of journalism – informs the ways in which student journalists often seek to do journalism differently, to produce 'alternative journalism' or present their outlets as 'alternative media.'
[22] As Benson and Neveu (2005: 1) emphasize, however, contra some critics (calling it "the same old Frankfurt school" or "Althusserian"), this volume is written for a popular audience, and should not be taken as a stand-alone work representative of the nuances of Bourdieu's position.

reconfigured – and the content of specific cultural capitals (the criteria of value internal to the field itself) similarly change over time. Even the most basic functions and routines associated with a particular field are historically contingent; as Michael Schudson (1988: 229) points out, "[t]he reporter, and reporting, were inventions of the 19th century middle-class public and its institutions. [...] What reporters report on, how they report, what they aim for and how they go about their work varies from one era to another."

Though the socio-cultural continuity which gives form and identity to particular fields is based in the reproduction of existing structure, pressures and impacts from without (e.g. adjustments in the political climate, social movements, cultural shifts, altered ecologies of policy, technological and economic influence) all introduce dynamism (ibid). Change, however, is rarely a simple matter of direct cause and effect; a given field tends to *refract*, inflecting with its own internal logic(s), inputs from other fields (Johnson 1993; Carroll and Hackett 2006). The importance of the journalistic field in society at large ultimately emanates from its proximity to others in the field of power, and its mediating role vis-à-vis all fields. Alongside the social sciences and politics, journalism tends to furnish its audience – and may in fact constrain its subjects and competitors – with its own production of representations or maps of the social, its own "legitimate vision of the social world" (Benson and Neveu 2005: 5-7). The journalistic field (to take up Johnson's metaphor) refracts a range of influences, as it does the range of voices it mediates for its public(s), through its own prism.[23]

For Carroll and Hackett (2006: 33-34), this eloquent metaphor implies the limitations of

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[23] Though at this point, without burdening the analysis with another, entirely distinct theoretical lineage, I should note the salience of another metaphor – that of 'gatekeeping.' The 'gatekeeping' metaphor, arising from White's (1950) study of one editor picking stories off the wire service for inclusion in his local daily, has been developed to describe the way that news-media producers select from a universe of information what stories make the paper (or programme), and what details are pertinent to a given story. Journalism, in its mediating role, not only *refracts*, but often excludes entirely, a range of possible stories, facts, 'angles' or voices.

accounts which overemphasize direct meddling by interested others – owners, advertisers, influential sources – as compared to those which address the greater import of changes in routine practices and "ground rules" over time. For Bourdieu, the journalistic field is key in contemporary societies, precisely because it serves – all the while refracting influences and messages through its own prism – in facilitating mass political communication, acting as a field of relay or mediation essential to consecrating and consolidating "the means of legitimate manipulation of the vision of the world (which is the definition of political action)" (Bourdieu 2005: 35). Given their key role in facilitating and inflecting the symbolic construction (and "legitimate manipulation") of reality for large populations, the practices and "ground rules" of journalism can have significant effects.

In keeping with such considerations, Carroll and Hackett (2006), drawing on Hackett and Zhao (1998), highlight the important effects of what they call a (discursive) "regime of objectivity" in defining contemporary journalism (especially in the US and Canada from the 20th century onwards) and affecting the ways in which journalistic mediation refracts other influences and messages. The 'regime of objectivity' is defined as "an interrelated complex of ideas and practices which provide a general model for conceiving, defining, arranging, and evaluating news texts, news practices, and news institutions," (Caroll and Hackett 2006: 33) which consists in five key dimensions:

1. "a *normative ideal* (factualness, detachment, accuracy, etc.);"
2. "an *epistemology* (assumptions about knowledge and reality, like the possibility of separating values from facts);"
3. "a set of *newsgathering and presentational practices* (like the use of appropriate sources);"
4. "a set of *institutional relations* (complex, specialized news organizations, staffed by professionals and enjoying autonomy from the state);"
5. "an *active ingredient in public discourse*, providing the language ('bias', 'fairness', 'balance') for everyday talk about news."

The 'regime of objectivity' they describe, clearly questioned and actively countered in some quarters from 1960s – at student newspapers and elsewhere, as noted in the first chapter – provides a model that characterizes a range of the kinds of logics and standards

that can affect how journalism refracts the influences and messages it mediates. In essence, the elements of the model guide both the self-conceptions and public perceptions of journalism, and furnish the key tropes and ideals of journalistic 'objectivity': especially an ostensible political neutrality veiled under the guise of non-bias, fairness, or balance.[24] It also underpins conventions of newsgathering and presentation such as the "web of facticity" described by Tuchman (1979), and clearly resonates not only with Bourdieu's account of the effective consecration of "particular legitimate visions" of the social, but also with the post-Gramscian model arising from the British Cultural Studies tradition (e.g. Hall et al 1978) and more recent attempts at defining the social implications and effects of journalism or media in general (e.g. Couldry 2003).

Two key points of resonance for all of these accounts pertain to mainstream journalism or news media's tendency to privilege certain sources of information in constructing news stories, and to the implications such privilege might have for political dissent or contention. As Tuchman (1979: 91-92) points out, news organizations typically rely on legitimated institutions that have access to centralized information to furnish the 'facts' that go into constructing a news story. Professional journalists often fail to question the right of elected officials to "make news" and hold all other voices accountable to "a more amorphous entity – the public" (ibid: 92). That is to say, as Bourdieu also emphasizes, that those already in positions of power and authority (such a politicians and their spokespeople, or to some extent government bureaucrats and 'experts' of various stripes) largely monopolize the field of (news) journalism – which in turn reinforces their hold over "the means of legitimate manipulation of the vision of the world."

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[24] Such notions may, of course, be genuine ideals rather than simply 'tropes' for many; indeed, professional ideals which spur journalists to seek unheard or dissenting voices on an issue can be a counterweight to the influence of politically and economically powerful forces.

Hall et al (1978) emphasize journalists' relative subordination as 'secondary definers' in contrast to those 'primary definers' (high government officials in particular, but also top bureaucrats, high police and legal officials, and other prominent persons) who have the symbolic power to define the contours of a given situation in their initial pronouncements; journalists, as 'secondary definers' are expected to 'report the news.' In addition, Hall et al suggest that mainstream journalism projects an image of the public that reifies and reinforces an ostensibly 'consensual' articulation of what 'the public' thinks and wants. That is – in an operation clearly connected with the ostensible political neutrality embedded in 'regimes of objectivity' – journalists often perpetuate representations which draw on an ostensive plurality or majority of *legitimate* voices in an identified collectivity (such as a nation-state, or a more delimited community or group), a similar construction – and sometimes a citeable justification – for representations of the public invoked by political leaders and other elites. The amorphous notion of 'the public' is in many ways a co-construction of journalistic discourse and those sources typically privileged in journalistic accounts; at the same time, the way in which large media organizations (the site of most prominent journalistic work) seek to address such an amorphous public can be seen to limit consideration of non-elite, non-expert voices which diverge from commonly-held points of view, thus negatively impacting the possible resonance of political dissent which is not legitimated by an appeal to numbers (i.e. 'majority public opinion').

The conventions associated with a 'regime of objectivity,' read through Hall, Tuchman and Bourdieu, can be seen as serving in part to legitimate existing relations of status and power – revealing the grounds on which social movement actors seek to contest mainstream media representations, and presenting the theoretical basis upon which academic critiques of mainstream journalists' treatments of protest, activism and social movements have been launched. Indeed, elements of the 'regime of objectivity' organize

major aspects of what many find objectionable in mainstream media/journalism –

including, but not limited to, strong claims to authority (i.e. to presenting facts and details

most relevant to audiences, and which most adequately summarize a given situation) in

journalistic representations, sourcing routines privileging the powerful (and ignoring or

ostracizing voices of dissent), media ownership concentration (as large organizations are

presumed to be more reliable at producing and verifying 'facts'), and public suspicion of

alternative modes or loci of discourse on topics 'in the news.'

Notwithstanding the validity of such critical thrust (which is taken up in more detail in

the following section), it is important to note that journalism/media are, in some form, a

seemingly inevitable component of contemporary societies (though the particular

standards and conventions which guide journalism and its institutional trappings are

variable). For better or for worse, journalists' production of news constructs "imagined

communities" (Anderson 1991) which unite large polities (e.g. nations or the populations of

large cities, or at least a substantial subset thereof, who have little prospect of direct

knowledge of all of their fellows), at least on a nominal basis, and (ideally) constitute a

'public sphere' (Habermas 1989) which can potentially facilitate political debate and

crystallize possibilities for change. The field of journalism is one in which social

collectivities are subject to (re)definition and values and priorities are projected for public

contemplation and interpretation, and in turn recursively re-implicated into the socio-

cultural background – albeit in a process which is always girded by an underlying dynamic

of inclusion/exclusion. As Gasher (2007: 302) puts it:

> journalists perform a validating function through their news judgment. News is, by
> definition, what is deemed important, what matters, what is significant to a
> particular community. [...J]ournalists, through their reportage, construct notions of
> community, of who belongs to a given community, what its boundaries are, not only
> in terms of geography, but in terms of culture: goals, ideals, values, notions of
> proper conduct. This is a complicated yet critical task in heterogeneous (multi-
> cultural, multi-faith, multilingual, multi-ethnic and multiracial) societies, as any
> number of stories about school dress codes or immigration laws can attest. The Fall
> 2005 riots in France, which drew attention to serious problems of *appurtenance*

among the country's visible minorities, providing a clear example of such a news event. Here, journalism is implicated in providing answers to the question, who are we, which is always echoed by the companion question, who are we not?

The *seemingly existential conundrum here* – the importance of journalism or other mass-mediated experience in articulating the values and ideals of "imagined communities" in contemporary societies as against critiques of exclusion and the contention that mainstream journalism is highly subject to economically and politically powerful influences – leads us to what Couldry and Curran (2003) term "the paradox of media power." Couldry (2003), who draws heavily on Bourdieu in his analysis, takes up this paradox as way to advance debate in communications and media studies (and social theory in general), where positive evaluations of media's social role speak to the implication and importance of media in everyday life and public discourse (but fail to register the "social impacts of media power") and negative evaluations typically speak to the latter, but do little to engage the everyday significance of media. As Couldry (2003: 19) suggests:

> The central paradox we have to grasp in assessing the media's social consequences is that we cannot separate *our* hopes, *our* myths, *our* moments of togetherness or conflict, from the mediated social forms which they now, almost always take.

The key question, therefore, with regard to the media, is that of "the uneven distribution of power to influence representations of social 'reality'" (ibid).

In Couldry's view, while the kinds of media representations produced by mainstream journalists do perform a vital social role, the degree to which these representations are held 'above' alternative representations (as more authoritative, consecrated by their place in the media and by the attendant prestige and public profile, as more *sacred* even - and we could easily add more 'fair,' 'balanced' or 'objective') remains problematic. The operations of 'media power,' for Couldry (who prefers another spatial metaphor to the above/below device just used) constitute a form of "misrecognition" of lived social relations he dubs "the myth of the mediated centre" (ibid: 41). By this account, the media – including both

commercial and public-service sites of journalistic production – are perceived as the sacred centre of social space, supporting "the notion of a 'mediated social order' in which all specific ideologies must compete, as well as legitimating the particular representational privilege of media" in putting up all of society for (self)inspection (46). In a way, this echoes Hall et al's (1978) notion of the reification of 'public opinion,' in that social relations as represented in media supersede their alternatives at the expense of those who would challenge dominant accounts, who must submit themselves to the refraction of the journalistic lens to be heard and seen as potentially legitimate; in another, it offers a new optic towards the representative claims of mainstream journalism ("Canada lives here" or "All the news that's fit to print"). Most certainly, it emphasizes the significance of Bourdieu's concern for the field of journalism "as weakly autonomous," and highly subject to the influence of both profit imperatives and political power – and reiterates, or perhaps accentuates, what he holds to be its key mediating role between fields (and its key location in the public relay, not to mention its own refractive role, vis-à-vis "the means of legitimate manipulation of the vision of the world").

### *Mainstream media and social movements: contested terrain, critical accounts*

The nature and operations of 'media power' and the macro-framework offered by Bourdieu clearly intersect with the sociological study of social movements. Melucci (1989; 1996), for example, suggests that contemporary social power relations and inequalities are expressed via symbolic codes implicit in cultural systems that regulate social behaviour. The main vector for the mass circulation of such codes, and therefore a key infrastructural resource for the (re)articulation of cultural systems (and therefore a key resource for those seeking to effect social change) is to be located in the mass media (presumably including mainstream journalism). Melucci holds that many people exist as passive consumers of

information laden with symbolic forms and meanings, unable to effectively counter the codes that are presented in hegemonic discourses. So, the media, as a key vector for symbolic codes, are an important field for contemporary social movements, where actors engage in action aimed at influencing discourse and contesting meanings. While Melucci's position does not champion the communicative potential of social movement actors in the media or journalistic field as unhindered or unproblematic in practice, he does (echoing the implications of the models elaborated by Bourdieu, Hall, Couldry and others) highlight its importance as a site for social movement articulation, diffusion, struggle and resistance.

For many social movement actors, including individual activists, organizations large and small, and voices arising from the kinds of loose and wide-ranging coalitions which typify some contemporary movements (e.g. alter-globalization and anti-war), mainstream news media are a target for messages and actions (such as demonstrations, culture jamming, publicity campaigns and other interventions) which seek to employ such media to amplify movement messages and spur public awareness, debate, and action on issues of concern to movement participants, adherents and sympathizers. Such actions are, of course, not always primarily intended to play for amplification and diffusion via mainstream media; actions such as public demonstrations clearly have effective functions as a form of direct communication with immediate witnesses, as performative acts which consolidate group solidarity, whether conceived as 'collective identity' or as a more fluid and contingent form of solidarity (McDonald 2002), and allow individuals to constitute themselves as 'moral subjects' in opposition to injustice (Crossley 2003).

Yet in light of the effects of 'media power,' the journalistic field is viewed by many as essential to movement success – and one of the primary means by which many people come to an awareness of many movement messages, actions and campaigns (and therefore come to grapple with contending positions on issues of socio-political importance and concern) is

through mainstream media coverage. As Jha (2007) notes, "social movement organizations consider both social protest and news coverage of social protest as major political resources" (40). Concurrent with more direct communications with the public (i.e. through movement-produced media) and efforts at addressing movement-internal priorities (maintaining solidarity and commitment, coordination and logistics, working out positions and tactics amenable to existing participants, adherents and supporters), movement actors often do consider the impact of their messages and actions as they are mediated by mainstream media. In doing so, social movement actors seek to 'frame' issues of concern in particular ways, and to achieve 'resonance' (to find purchase with individuals for their preferred framing) with at least some part of the audience to which their messages and actions are conveyed.

'Framing,' in the context of social movement studies (Snow and Benford 1992; Gamson 1995; Johnston and Noakes 2005), typically refers a process of definition and articulation which renders a particular view of the world and of the salient connections between actors, processes and modes of action by drawing upon existing cultural (symbolic, affective) resources. Ultimately arising from concepts pioneered by Bateson (1972) and Goffman (1974), and admittedly subject to potential conceptual slippage – particularly in relation to concepts of ideology or rhetoric (see Johnston and Noakes 2005) – the framing concept has distinct histories in both social movement studies (typically rooted in sociology, political science and social psychology) and communications, media and journalism studies (including the sociology of media), with significant overlap between the two. The concept has (despite occasional confusion) proven useful in theorizing the interchange between movement, media and publics in both disciplinary contexts.

"Collective action frames" (Snow and Benford 1992; Gamson 1995) are a type of action-oriented framing, key to the constitution and consolidation of collective identity or similar

binding processes that help to initiate and direct action in social movements. Gamson (1995: 90) lists three essential components:

1.  Injustice: framing tends to justify and evoke "moral indignation," "naming injustice" in its articulation of a given issue, situation or event(s) in such a way that some motivated individual(s) or group(s), rather than abstract entities or forces, can be shown to contribute to negative outcomes indicated within the frame.
2.  Agency: framing tends to facilitate a sense of agency, fostering views which "imply some sense of collective efficacy and deny the immutability of some undesirable situation" (ibid), thus contributing to the constitution of social movement collective.
3.  Identity: framing tends to entail a process of identification which describes a (positively valued) 'we' and (negatively valued, morally culpable) 'they' who stand in opposition over the named injustice which organizes the frame.

In the process of "frame alignment" (Snow and Corrigall-Brown 2005) social movement constituents generate, compose, and experiment with sets of meanings and descriptions that relate to (and serve to redefine) existing events and processes. Frame alignments that prove widely resonant typically draw on existing value-sets and symbolic repertoires (e.g. on 'rights discourse' in liberal democracies, as in the case of civil rights, liberal feminist or gay marriage activism), showing how an issue represents an injustice that requires rectification. In addition to drawing on existing value-sets and symbolic repertoires, effective frames must accomplish issue-linkage, drawing connections between mediated knowledge of a given issue and the everyday lives of potential constituents or supporters, and thus allowing the mobilization of experiential knowledge and affect. Gamson suggests that potential constituents can be given the opportunity to gain experiential knowledge relevant to movement-generated collective action frames vicariously, through the kind of personalization of general issues achieved by presenting first-person accounts (Gamson 2005). Of course, many efforts at generating collective action frames fail to gain resonance; those which fail to invoke a reaction or mobilize support call to hand "the problem of non-resonant frames," (Snow and Corrigall-Brown 2005) a problem which may be exacerbated by unsympathetic media portrayals of social movement messages and actions.

Gamson (1995) and Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993) concur with Bourdieu, Melucci and others who emphasize the centrality of (news) media as a field of contention, and further suggest that we view social movements and media as "interacting systems" which exist in a state of tension and transaction by which they exert mutual influence (weighted, however, such that movements tend to be much more dependent on media than vice versa). Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993: 115) remind us that social movements "do not represent a unified actor but an array of actors who are affected by each other's media transactions, sometimes in contrasting ways." Similarly, the media is not an undifferentiated sphere, consisting as it does (even considering only the 'mainstream') in a variety of outlets and an array of individual journalists, each (despite persistent constraints) with varying institutional contexts, prerogatives, orientations and audiences. Within the diversity of potential movement constituents, some will tend towards more conciliatory (reformist, gradualist) or militant (radical, adversarial) framing – an issue that becomes highly relevant when the messages and actions of the latter become a focus for media coverage, or in the case of movements which tend towards militancy.

Gamson (1995: 101) suggests that collective action frames are necessarily adversarial, relying on a process of othering and social sanction and isolating social actors who are responsible for conduct contributing to a named injustice, in contrast to 'aggregate frames' which render the action to be taken in personal rather than collective terms and "attempt to mobilize their constituents with an all-inclusive 'we'," "the world, humankind or [...] all good citizens." Aggregate frames, in contrast to collective action frames, may be more conducive to 'consensus movements'[25] which have minimal organized opposition and enjoy generalized support (e.g. the movement against drunk driving). Collective action frames, however, may still exist – as in the case of movements which take issue with widespread

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[25] Gamson is here following the work of Lofland and McCarthy (1989) and Wolfson (1992).

cultural norms or 'dominant codes' – where the target is "diffused through the whole civil society and the 'they' being pursued is structurally elusive" (ibid). However, in Gamson's sense, collective action frames may be differentiated from aggregate frames in that they seek to attribute responsibility and blame, to seek sanction and amelioration, and foment collective action – rather than individual response. This proves a particularly significant distinction when considered alongside Hall et al's (1978)[26] point that mainstream journalism (under the sway of 'primary definers') frequently projects images of reified publics – that it often defines the 'public' or 'the community' (and politics) in 'consensual' terms, excluding dissent.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

'Framing,' in the context of communications, media and journalism studies, has its own distinct literature and connotations, though these often dovetail with the work on 'framing' in social movement studies. As a general approach, the examination of media framing is diverse, prompting, on one hand, calls to consolidate and clarify a common 'paradigm' (Entman 1993) and, on the other, assertions that work on framing constitutes a 'program of research' and ought to embrace a diversity of appropriations which seek to accommodate the idea to different cases and supplementary theories (D'Angelo 2002). More inclined towards the latter, I will note here only two deployments of the framing concept in the context of journalism/news which are of interest for present purposes, drawing on Iyengar (1991) and Nielsen (2008), with the simple aim of pointing to some of the ways in which the concept may be deployed.

Iyengar (1991) focuses on a particular aspect of media framing of issues which is very pertinent to the coverage of social movement messages and actions; his notion of 'episodic' and 'thematic' framing evokes the difference between coverage which focuses on the

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[26] See also Hall (1981).

transient and particular and that which focuses on general implications and context. As Iyengar (1991: 14) puts it:

> The episodic news frame takes the form of a case study or event-oriented report and depicts concrete issues in terms of concrete instances (for example, the plight of a homeless person or a teenage drug user, the bombing of an airliner, or an attempted murder. The thematic frame, by contrast, places public issues in some more general or abstract context [...] directed at general outcomes or conditions.

Thematic framing, to point out a relevant example, might elaborate the social or political grievances of a group involved in political contention. Episodic framing, however, is pervasive, and has a negative impact on the public's likelihood to hold authorities responsible for effecting change to alleviate problems (and indeed may act as a barrier to understanding, and to the accomplishment of key social movement framing tasks such as issue linkage and the establishment of identity and agency); a key premise of the work is that the context and form of presentation – at least as much as individuals' relatively stable cultural or ideological dispositions – affects such attributions of responsibility (ibid).

Nielsen (2008) combines 'critical frame analysis' (focusing on the constructed nature of journalistic texts, and examining the presence and arrangement of elements selected for inclusion, looking "to establish whether the emotional-volitional tones or moral terms in articles support the status quo, provide an alternative, or are critical of the events, issues, and agents that are the focus of the story" (ibid: 607)) with a 'dialogic framing approach' drawing on the work of Bakhtin, which "locates the author's axiological position in the tonality of the utterance, over and against, or in solidarity with, moral terms addressed to the implied audience" (ibid). Considering such concerns for both the ways in which stories are constructed (as implying support, critique or a proposed alternative to the status quo) and the fashion in which the implied audience is addressed, along with Iyengar's notion of 'episodic' or 'thematic' framing, it is not difficult to see that the interaction of news framing and movement-generated collective action frames (in light of the fact, as Gamson (1995:94)

points out that, "a demonstration having no media coverage at all is a nonevent, unlikely to have any positive influence on either mobilizing potential challengers or influencing any target") is a complex relationship, but one that is essential to how movements and activism may be received by wider publics, and therefore key to any potential impacts. News framing which, as many academic critiques have suggested is the case for movements such as the anti-globalization movement, tends towards support for the status quo and is predominantly critical or dismissive of movements, and which presents protest through 'episodic' frames which fail to address the context in which protesters seek to express their dissent publically, is a major problem for movement constituents/activists.

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Establishing a basis in the literature for my contention that journalistic portrayals of protest raise issues that are worth addressing further, the next few paragraphs turn to a selection of empirical studies. Without implying that the situation is not complex and often ambivalent, it is hard to ignore the fact that mainstream media portrayals of events such as public protests can be problematic for a number of reasons – whether outright negative, poorly contextualized, or sensationalistic, such coverage has a history of describing movements as manifestations of marginal radicalism prone to fomenting disorder and violence, and lacking in political vision, common sense or significant support (e.g. Gitlin 1980; Adler and Mittleman 2004; Rosie and Gorringe 2009). This is particularly the case for some social movements (the anti-globalization movement is a prime example, though many key studies reach back to the 1960s and 1970s) that seek to question system-level dynamics of contemporary capitalism, militarism and pervasive inequalities based in geography/status, class, race or ethnicity, and to challenge powerful social institutions.[27]

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[27] While the cases here almost exclusively refer to the North Atlantic countries (the US, UK, Quebec and Canada), Leung (2010) describes extremely similar framing of anti-globalization protest in local

Many empirical investigations into the treatment of social movement messages and actions have applied 'framing' perspectives or the post-Gramscian approach exemplified by Hall *et al* to cases of protest event coverage, explicitly examining the results at the intersection between social movement activity and the journalistic production of news. Murdock (1981)[28] provides a particularly early example, applying a framework much like Hall's to analyze coverage of an October 27, 1968 anti-Vietnam war demonstration in London, UK. Six weeks in advance of the event, after a leak from the police, "MILITANT PLOT FEARED IN LONDON" was the headline of the first mainstream media mention of the upcoming demonstration. Murdock's analysis notes that the press failed to contextualize the event (in terms of the motivations of participants and the larger political issues which gave rise to it), relied heavily on authorities (especially police and government) as sources, and essentially gave rise to what Stanley Cohen (2002),[29] who worked in the same milieu of British Cultural Studies at the time, has referred to as a 'moral panic'. The headlines when it was all over included, even though by Murdock's account "there were relatively few incidents of confrontation between police and demonstrators" (1981: 212):

> "POLICE WIN BATTLE OF GROSVENOR SQUARE AS 6000 ARE REPELLED"
> "FRINGE FANATICS FOILED AT DEMONSTRATION – WHAT THE BOBBIES FACED"
> "THE DAY THE POLICE WERE WONDERFUL" (cited in Murdock 1981: ibid).

Gitlin's (1980) discussion of news media's impact on social movements in his analysis of the New Left echoes similar concerns, including a recurrent emphasis on conflict as a news value (which led to "playing up" (ibid: 229-230) the "violence" of radicals); as the New Left movement became more visibly militant in the late 1960s "the movement was surrounded by a firebreak of discrediting images, images partly but *only* partly of its own making" (ibid: 183). Decades later, Ackerman (2000, cited in Howley 2005: 17) describes news framing of

Hong Kong (Chinese- and English-language) media coverage surrounding the 2005 WTO meetings held there.
[28] The study was originally published in 1973.
[29] Originally published 1972.

coverage of the anti-WTO demonstrations in Seattle in 1999; three distinct frames described focus on 1) protesters, "stereotyped as odd-looking and misinformed students living out fantasies of 1960s-era youthful protest," 2) "official sources" suggesting that protest is hardly merited by a generally rosy social and economic situation, and 3) violence and property destruction. The latter, in particular, can be seen to recur in subsequent coverage of the anti-globalization movement, potentially obscuring accurate accounts of protest events and protesters' substantive concerns (Howley 2005: 17-18).

Jha (2007) provides an interesting bridge between the period of the New Left and more contemporary anti-globalization movements. Jha compares news coverage of the 1967 'March on the Pentagon' against the Vietnam War with that of the 1999 'Battle in Seattle' which opposed the WTO ministerial meetings and sought to counter pervasive negative effects of a neoliberal regime of international financial governance. Jha sought to evaluate coverage of both events in national and local mainstream press, employing the categories of *framing* (drawing on Iyengar's typology of episodic and thematic framing), *sourcing* (examining whether citations are from 'government and trade' or 'protester' sources, and whether these in turn come from 'official,' 'authoritative' or 'unknown' actors) and *valence* (assessing whether news stories are 'positive', 'negative' or 'ambivalent' in their characterization of protest and protesters).[30] Her results indicate a selection bias towards official and authoritative 'government and trade' sources, a prevalence of 'episodic' framing, and significantly more instances of negative valence (though most stories were coded as ambivalent). Interestingly, Jha found only minimal differences in distribution across these three categories of variables for the two cases 30 years removed, indicating that concerns raised by Gitlin, Murdock and others remain pertinent in the contemporary period.

Elsewhere, Adler and Mittelman (2004), seek to "reconstitute 'common-sense'

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[30] I employ the latter two variables in my own analysis of coverage, in mainstream and student media, of anti-globalization and anti-police brutality demonstrations. See Chapter 6.

knowledge" about anti-globalization protest via an analysis of mainstream English-language media coverage of protest events in the US, UK and Southeast Asia, which they contrast to accounts derived from activist interviews. They note attention in the press to "considerable discord among the protesters," "propensity for violence" (citing the New York Times' description of "wild protest melees at Seattle and Genoa") and "incoherence" (citing *The Economist*'s assertion that protester goals are "too absurd" and arguments "too incoherent" to merit serious consideration) (ibid: 191-192). In contrast, two thirds of activists interviewed categorically excluded violence as a legitimate element of their protest (ibid: 205) – only roughly one-fifth considered it "a legitimate strategy," a view qualified by circumstance – and the authors found, despite specific differences, evidence of a "general accord on the need for democratic accountability, redistribution of wealth and opportunities, and respect for local culture in shaping the future of globalization" (208).

In the case of Quebec, Dupuis-Deri (2006) notes that mainstream media characterizations of 'anarchists', a political identification (or attribution) of significant importance among the constituents of contemporary anti- or alter-globalization movements (Epstein 2001; Graeber 2002; Dupuis-Deri 2007b; Gordon 2007; Gaudet and Sarrasin 2008), take the designation to imply at best a clueless utopian orientation towards 'serious politics' and at worst an ideological excuse for *casseurs* [vandals] who desire only to smash windows and revel in the ensuing chaos of running battles with police.[31] And it is not only those who engage in confrontational tactics (or who identify with disvalued political traditions) who get short shrift. Examining the press treatment of protests prior to the G8 meetings in Gleneagles, Scotland in 2005, Rosie and Gorringe (2009) find a mainstream media focus split between "the star- studded Live8 concerts or repeated predictions of

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[31] Dupuis-Deri's work elsewhere (2007a) describes the political visions and logics of Black Bloc participants, indicating that many of those choosing to engage in property destruction/confrontation at demonstrations are far from clueless, inarticulate, or without strategic intention/political analysis.

forthcoming chaos" (50). Little (positive) attention was paid to protest actions organized by a "respectable" coalition under the banner 'Make Poverty History,' which promoted peaceful protest and even took steps to mount a significant PR campaign in the media. "[T]he symbolic ringing of Edinburgh's city centre by hundreds of thousands of white-clad protestors" (ibid) was scarce among headlines which recall Murdock's (1981) analysis of 1968, despite a complete absence of arrests at the events in question:

> 'Clashes fail to Spoil the Big Day in Scotland'.
> 'Violent gangs split from anti-poverty march to battle cops on side streets'
> 'Anarchists storm riot police barricade' (cited in Rosie and Gorringe 2009: 50)

Although the overall complex of protest-related events was successful in gaining media attention (a stated goal, trumpeted as a success by organizers), Rosie and Gorringe (2009: 51) suggest that the near-exclusive focus on celebrity musicians and protester violence (following the "shorthand" of anarchist-inspired moral panic established in earlier coverage of Seattle, Quebec and Genoa) was less than ideal from the point of view of movement constituents concerned with the unequal distribution of wealth and resources in the world. The ease and effectiveness of employing particular frames and vocabularies, and selecting particular events and issues for attention, as in the other studies surveyed here, seems to trump the framing generated by movement constituents.

Looking back at the original 1999 Seattle protests against the WTO ministerial in light of a recent Hollywood film – *Battle in Seattle* (2008) – one writer and activist sums up the mainstream media's treatment thus (Engler 2008: n.p.):

> As Andre 3000's character in the movie quips, even the label "Battle in Seattle" makes the protests sound less like a serious political event and more "like a Monster Truck show." While the demonstrations were still playing out and police were busy arresting some 600 people, New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman issued his now-famous edict stating that deluded activists were just "looking for their 1960s fix." This type of disregard has continued with the release of the film. A review in the Seattle Weekly dismissively asked, "Remind me again what those demonstrations against the WTO actually accomplished?"

At one end of the spectrum, protesters may be dismissed as thrill-seeking or hopelessly

utopian, and at the other as violent thugs, nihilists, or worse (all of this assuming their events get covered at all). The complexity of coalitions and individual views on immense social and political issues appears too often ill-treated in mainstream news media, and a frequent theme seems to be the construction of protestors as "folk devils" (Cohen 2002) in coverage which focuses on (real, anticipated or imagined) violence and disorder, however marginal, and tends to de-legitimize dissent. The focus here on the historical moments of the New Left and anti- or alter-globalization movements is intended more to direct attention to the treatment of protest in mainstream media than to narrow attention to these particular movements – though I turn to coverage of anti-globalization movements and protest events specifically in my analysis, and the treatment of protest violence proves particularly relevant in discussing another selected case: that of coverage regarding the annual March Against Police Brutality in Montreal.

The essential question for the present study vis-à-vis the elements of such critiques of mainstream media treatments of social movement messages and actions is whether or not the *Link* and *McGill Daily* might evade or counter the kinds of processes and dynamics highlighted by the critics. That is, in what ways might student newspapers serve as a viable, and potentially more fair or sympathetic, alternative? This question hints at another: can the *Link* and *McGill Daily* be classified as 'alternative media' (and what would that mean)? The following sections seek to explore, and indeed complicate, the concept of 'alternative media' itself, and to examine how it might relate to the larger field of journalism.

### *Alternative media*

'Alternative media,' variously conceptualized (variously constituted and practiced, as well), have received significant attention in recent academic literature. Although this means that there are a number of resources to draw on, it also implies a certain theoretical

difficulty in disentangling the threads of a multiplicitous and not always consistent set of accounts and definitions. In popular and academic settings, the idea of alternative media as both a site and means of fomenting resistance to established power and oppression, dominant discourses, and mainstream media institutions has sparked a great deal of discussion, and inspired a great many projects and investments. As James F. Hamilton (2008: 1) notes, the concept is often presented in overly simplistic terms:

> Faith in communications to overcome persistent problems and inequalities in society has been a long-standing feature of modern life. Increasingly, such faith is expressed in terms of a perceived opposition between, on one hand, mainstream communications institutions (whether commercial or statist) and their enforcement of a narrow, self-serving agenda of protecting power and privilege and, on the other hand, alternative media and their ability to bring previously hidden information to public awareness and to give a voice to the voiceless.

Yet, as Hamilton elaborates, things are rarely, if ever, so simple. Academic treatments of 'alternative media' have sometimes found difficulty in consolidating a definition, and the general term can be associated with a host of perspectives on what 'alternative media' is or should be, and on whether this is even the most appropriate term for media which arise in a variety of contexts and with a range of missions. Rodriguez (2001: 164) describes "a polymorphic ensemble which rejects tight definition"; Elgul-Bibawi (2009: 18) suggests that "the diversity of definitions may in fact reflect the variety of alternative media existing in practice." Wading into these sometimes murky theoretical waters, I wish to initially highlight two important perspectives in current efforts at defining 'alternative media' which concern themselves, respectively, with how certain media outlets may serve a community not well-served by commercial or state media, and with how such outlets may serve as an 'alternative' to the mainstream by providing counter-information, critique and registering a diversity of voices (Bailey *et al* 2008).

The former of the two perspectives noted above is often foregrounded under the rubric of 'community media,' a notion which focuses on the ability of certain media outlets to

provide an opening and a platform for, and so better represent or serve, a given community (whether of geography or interest, always to some extent 'imagined') not well-served by mainstream media. Howley (2005: 5-7), while seeking to avoid getting bogged down in debates over the most adequate definition of 'community', draws on ideas from Benedict Anderson (1991), Anthony B. Cohen (1985) and Stuart Hall (1986) to suggest that it might be best evoked as a symbolic construction (an 'articulation' in Hall's double sense, both *utterance* and *tie*) of horizontal connection and (self-)identification across difference – a construction built through practices and acts of communication. For Howley (2005: 2), "community media" are "grassroots or locally oriented media access inititatives predicated on a profound sense of dissatisfaction with mainstream media form and content, dedicated to the principles of free expression and participatory democracy, and committed to enhancing community relations and promoting community solidarity."

In my view, the *Link* and *Daily* constitute a form of 'community media', albeit in a quasi-geographic sense of 'community', constituted primarily by the university, an institution which is geographically located, but which is not coextensive with the city, and circumscribes its membership (and the potential for productive participation) according to student status. In this context, student newspapers connect a productive organization (the student newspaper) with a community of interest (engaged observers of the university community and independent media, often including an array of individuals with *investments in social movements and activism) and a more dispersed casual readership.* Rhetorically, we might see the *Link* and *McGill Daily* as constituting an institutionally-defined 'imagined community' in Anderson's (1991) sense – 'students' as addressed by the newspaper – and articulating connections between this and other local communities and groups, including activist groups, connecting students with the city and engaging with activists and others. A definition such as Howley's thus seems largely to fit the profile of

some student newspapers.

The second perspective I wish to focus on here is that of 'alternative media' as *altertnative(s) to* the mainstream. From this perspective, the key operation is some form of opposition, implying action related to the "dissatisfaction with mainstream media form and content" mentioned by Howley. As Bailey et al (2008: 15) put it, 'alternative media' act "as a supplement to the mainstream media, or as a counterhegemonic critique." For some, taking up the latter quite directly, this may entail conceptualizing 'alternative media' as outlets for direct communications from social movement constituents or organizations to a wider public otherwise reliant upon mainstream-mediated accounts of social movement messages and actions. In so doing, they may act in light of dissatisfaction with mainstream portrayal of social movements and protest events – as discussed above – and seek to better represent movement-generated messages and collective action frames.

Owens and Palmer (2003), for example, discuss how anarchist activists used online communications to do an end-run around mainstream depictions of the 1999 anti-globalization demonstrations in Seattle – and, in fact, to capitalize on the very publicity generated by attention to the 'Battle in Seattle' as a way to draw people in to hear their side of the story. They describe such activity as a form of 'counter-public relations' (direct social movement communications challenging the mainstream media on movement issues and the depiction of protest events). Such a view of alternative media is very much in line with what Downing *et al* (2001) call 'radical alternative media.' Downing traces close – some suggest too close (Elgul-Bibawi 2009: 28) – interconnections between the operations of (counter-hegemonic) social movements and those of 'alternative media,' such that disambiguation becomes difficult, and the possibility of identifying the 'alternative' in anything but an explicitly movement-oriented outlet, artefact or practice seems tenuous.

Downing (2001: 34-35) sees radical-alternative media as expressions of 'popular

culture,' hothouses for the development of the 'counter-public spheres' of movement activity where movement-internal differences can be worked out, and as vectors for the diffusion of "social movements in full flood." He suggests that they must be acknowledged for "the public conversations they spark within the communications networks with which they interact" and for "how they may light a mnemonic flame that sometimes burns over decades and generations" (ibid). Although Downing does discuss defining aspects of 'alternative media,' including dynamic ideals rooted in dialogue and conversation, which can, for example, be connected to the democratic ideals dear to many journalists (e.g Kovach and Rosenstiel's (2007) insistence that journalism should provide "a forum for public criticism and compromise"), his concept is so much bound up in notions of radical-popular expression as sustaining social movements that it makes it difficult to see how 'alternative media' can be anything other than 'movement media.' As Chris Atton points out, Downing thus seems to leave unfulfilled his "striving for a more 'impure,' hybridized version of radical media"(cited in Elgul-Bibawi 2008: 28).

When 'alternative media' is necessarily 'movement media,' there is limited room for the kind of outlets and practices that might bridge a dichotomous notion of the alternative/mainstream split. From a journalistic perspective (and a Bourdieusian one), the autonomy of outlets fulfilling Downing's vision would seem to be collapsed into the field of activism. Downing's vision of 'alternative media' or the kind of 'counter-public relations' described by Owens and Palmer (drawing on Downing) clearly point to a particularly direct sense in which some outlets might be *alternative(s)* to the mainstream: 'alternative media' can disseminate the views of social movement constituents, foster conversation (and provide inspiration) within movements, and directly contest the representations of mainstream media. Yet it is worth disambiguating the concepts of 'alternative media' and 'social movements'; indeed, I am particularly interested in *alternative(s)* to the mainstream

that do not necessarily identify fully with, or speak on behalf of, particular movements. I believe that student newspapers such as the *Link* and the *Daily* fall into this category – presenting a kind of hybridized media form, neither 'movement media' (i.e. direct communication by movement constituents) nor mainstream journalism.

To look at the notion of 'alternative media' as *alternative(s)* to the mainstream another way, as James F. Hamilton puts it, "'mainstream' [can be] seen as maximizing audiences by appealing to safe, conventional formulas, and 'alternative' foregoing the comfortable, depoliticizing formulas to advocate programs of social change" (cited in Elghul-Bebawi 2009: 21). In this connection, we might profitably recall Hackett and Zhao's 'regime of objectivity' – and the 'alternative' notions of 'non-objective' reporting introduced to some Canadian university papers in the 1960s, and which have continued to have influence (though in tension with more 'professional' journalistic ideals, as described at length in Chapter 5). Yet even such a split – between, as it were, mainstream media acting as 'agents of social reproduction' and alternative media acting as 'agents of social change' – is not so *simple as it may appear*.

Hamilton (2008), for example, sees a problem with notions of 'alternative media' based in the prevalent tendency to mark the 'alternative' out in essential opposition to its counter – a move which underemphasizes commonalities between 'mainstream' and 'alternative' communications. In the words of Downing, who (notwithstanding his own conceptions' persistent tendency to conflate or subordinate 'alternative media' to 'social movements') himself laments the binarism of some of his earlier work on alternative media, "everything, at some point, is alternative to something else" (2001: 16). Hamilton, for his part, enjoins us to consider the oft-neglected "persistence, hybridity, and commonality of communications within specific historical conditions" (Hamilton 2008: 5). Hamilton seeks to interrogate a

tendency he observes in much 'alternative media':[32] "what amounts to undemocratic measures of success – how many people did we get to believe what we wanted them to?" (Hamilton 2008: 4). Thus emerges both an important theoretical consideration (that hybridity and commonality across the spectrum of media is to be expected; that 'alternative' is not so clear-cut as having the 'right' political message or contesting mainstream representations) and the beginnings for one substantive defining feature of alternative media. 'Alternative media,' in such a view, is that which contributes towards a more democratic system of communications and which assists, following Raymond Williams, in dispensing with "the idea that communication is the business of a minority talking to, instructing, leading on, the majority" (cited in Hamilton 2008: 3).

The "polymorphic ensemble" of 'citizens' or 'alternative media,' for Rodriguez (2001), is to "be understood as different, creative, and clever expressions of the same drive – citizens attempting to break into the established mediascape, citizens' elbowing their way into a fissure where their own voices – and whatever they have to say can have a presence in the public realm" (ibid: 165). She shares with Hamilton, Downing and others a concern for "democratic communications," and suggests that interest in a tightly circumscribed definition is misplaced, preferring instead to focus on participants' "creative intentionality in altering the mediascape" (ibid). The potential for participation by diverse non-professionals (thus supplementing or subverting the functions of mainstream journalism or other communicative modes) marks out another sense in which such media may furnish *alternative(s)* to the mainstream. Atton addresses a similar point, suggesting that "rather than media production being the province of elite, centralized organizations and institutions, alternative media offer opportunities to create their own media 'from the periphery'" (Atton 2004: 9). Through these expressions of the importance of participation,

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[32] Common to the logic of marketing or PR, and not uncommon in efforts at social movement communications, though this a complicated question – see Harold (2007).

we see two main areas of concern: the (public) self-expression of individuals and groups – or, at least, negotiated forms of representation which seek to be more attentive to their subjects – and the contestation of 'mainstream' domination of the field of media and journalism.

For my purposes here, 'alternative media' (as can be applied to student newspapers) may be best conceptualized as a) media which serves a community and encourages participation by non-professionals in the production of news and comment, b) media which provides *alternative(s)* to the mainstream, by supplementing or challenging the accounts of events and issues by mainstream journalism and (ideally) by avoiding the instrumental (or vanguardist) approach to communications and "undemocratic measures of success" noted by Hamilton (2008) – with particular respect to the treatment of the concerns of social movements and activists and to protest events (without simply acting as direct communications for movements). Before concluding this discussion of the theoretical literature pertinent to the question of how student journalism may be viewed as 'alternative' with a brief treatment of Atton (2003; 2009) and Atton and Hamilton's (2008) notion of 'alternative journalism' and returning to how this fits in with a Bourdieusian take on the 'field of journalism,' I return to a discussion which seeks to characterize journalism and journalists more specifically than the macro-sociological discussions of Bourdieu, Hall and others – and to emphasize the undecided nature of the division between 'mainstream' and 'alternative' by focusing on some 'openings' (alongside attendant 'conservatizing pressures') in existing journalistic standards and practices which give the lie to any broadstroke condemnation of mainstream journalism. In addition, I set up a distinction, drawing on Gasher (2005), between 'journalism' and 'the news industry' which is particularly pertinent to understanding student journalism at the *Link* and the *Daily*, where simultaneous identification with and reliance on standards associated with mainstream or

professional journalism and a push towards an 'alternative' take (often associated with a more-or-less explicitly conceived activist role) are frequently manifest.

### *Inside the journalistic field: standards, pressures and openings*

While Bourdieu (alongside others) provides an excellent lens towards the macro-sociological place of journalism, he has little to say about the self-conceptions of journalists, or specific differentiations among outlets, subgroups or individuals within (or in liminal positions relative to) the field. Thus, in this section – in which I seek to emphasize the ambivalent, and indeed potentially positive, possibilities which arise in the context of the standards and 'specific' cultural capitals of journalism writ large – I draw on Zelizer (1993) for a theoretical base from which I seek to describe some of the openings, as well as the problematics, which emerge from the field. As does Bourdieu, Zelizer holds that practitioners negotiate the standards and expectations predominant in the field and its various sites – albeit under a number of constraints. Insofar as such standards and expectations might be defined for a 'journalistic field' in general (whether or not one takes Bourdieu's lead in tending to specify this at the national level), it is useful to consider journalism both as a profession, a vocation or career for reporters, writers and editors, and as an 'interpretive community.'

Zelizer (1993), a former journalist, introduces the latter perspective (drawing on Stanley Fish, among others, for theoretical inspiration), which she juxtaposes with a 'dominant frame' in academic work which views journalism primarily in terms of a sociology of professions, casting an occupational group as such when it "shows certain combinations of skill, autonomy, training and education, testing of competence, organization, codes of conduct, licensing, and service orientation," and when the named profession "provides a body of knowledge that instructs individuals what to do and avoid in

any given circumstance" (402). Journalists as professionals, as Gaye Tuchman has observed, may be cast as experts in determining what actually constitutes 'news,' which in turn allows them a measure of control over their work (Tuchman 1978; Zelizer 1993: 402). The 'alternative frame,' proposed in contrast to the professional one, views journalists as an 'interpretive community' via which they derive shared (textual) practices and standards more "through the informal associations that build up around shared interpretations" than through "rigid indications of training or education" (405).

The dominant (professional) frame, Zelizer argues (402-405), ignores the fact that journalism as a profession is weakly institutionalized, with many journalists eschewing formal training, professional associations and codified and enforceable ethics documents or licensing procedures; this frame also sidelines journalists' *"usage of constructions of reality,"* reliance on *"informal networking"* – the "ways that reporters absorb rules, boundaries, and a sense of appropriateness about their actions without ever actually being informed of them by their superiors" (403) – and commonly employed *"narrative and storytelling"* practices in journalism, all elements which tend to be absent from the public self-presentation of journalism, but which remain a part of how journalists shape their self-conceptions and practice. Such neglected aspects of journalistic practice – related to the social, cultural and symbolic capital on which (professional) journalists trade – are key to questioning conventions such as those associated with 'regimes of objectivity,' and the realization that journalism is defined by it's practice and its practitioners highlights the potential for challenge and change in the field of journalism. As primarily an 'interpretive community' rather than a well-institutionalized profession, journalism appears all the more potentially permeable; as Anderson (2008: 254) summarizes Zelizer's position, "[t]he fundamental link between journalistic expertise and journalistic power [...] is discursive boundary construction." Discursive boundaries, much more than those built up on the basis of more

formal requirements, are potentially subject to being contested and/or crossed.

Hartley (2000: 40), noting that journalists themselves may often be wary of textualized or academicized representations of their craft, suggests that their own self-representations tend to focus on:

- "journalists as an occupational group defined principally as those who have worked in newsrooms of recognized print and broadcast media;
- journalism as a craft defined principally by its practice (a practice that cannot be professionalized since journalism remains a trade where the employer regulates entry);
- journalism as an occupational ideology based on mutuality of contacts, sources, experience, haunts, and hanging about in doorways with one's peers waiting for the same story."

Thus, one might say that a journalist is simply someone who does journalism in an institutionalized work setting, and with attention to stories pursued by other journalists whom one knows and who (to a certain extent) know those whom one knows also (and, in Bourdieusian terms, one who has been adequately socialized to identify with the common *illusio* of the field, and to trade in its 'specific' cultural capitals).

Student journalists are typically not yet, or only partially (e.g. through formal journalism training), linked in to the mainstream journalistic community. Indeed, to the extent that identification with standards associated with the 'interpretive community' of mainstream journalists might be relevant in this context, it is as emergent both in the context of these very publications and, in some cases, in the process of formal education/training. The kinds of standards relevant to mainstream or professional journalism will, of course, have some bearing on the conduct of student journalists (positively or negatively); indeed, it seems unlikely that those interested in producing a (student) newspaper would do so without drawing on some of the cultural resources (conventions of news-gathering and writing, means of self-legitimation) generated in more institutionalized journalistic contexts, whether these be the more mundane precepts of the 'inverted pyramid' style of writing and a general appreciation of 'news values' such as scandal or human interest, or the grander

visions diffused through the popular imagination in films such as Teacher's Pet (1958) All the President's Men (1976), or The Year of Living Dangerously (1982).

Another point to which Hartley (2000) draws attention is a certain critical spirit within (mainstream) journalism, "a primary *theory of journalism* for practitioners," the central thesis of which is "that truth is violence, reality is war, news is conflict" (40):

> Journalism's heroic figures are the combative interviewer who won't take no for an answer, the war junkie following death around the world, the adversarial investigative reporter, the crusading paper or programme. The good journalistic watchdog fights for stories that someone doesn't want told; the best stories are those that expose violence and corruption within seemingly respectable institutions, from tin-pot dictatorships to children's homes. Journalism is combat.

This 'watchdog' role (and an attendant ideology) for the press has historical roots, connected with the political orientations driving the investigative ('muckracking') impetus described by Rosner (2008), and consecrated in such moments as the *Washington Post* coverage of the Watergate affair in the early 1970s (and its crystallization in film and other popular media). At the same time (indicating the Janus-faced nature of many journalistic standards), the 'watchdog' ideology gives rise to what some consider an excessively adversarial, sometimes sensationalistic, tone which has been held to contribute to public cynicism and disaffection with politics (Schudson 2003).

In keeping with such a "canine analogy," Carroll and Hackett (2006: 22) point out that this kind of critique sets up an apparent binary between views of (mainstream) media journalism as either "mad dog" or "lap dog," though they go on to suggest, taking the example of US right-wing populist personalities Rush Limbaugh and Bill O'Reilly, that the two are not necessarily in opposition from a left perspective critical of corporate power, as "the media's alleged hostility to authority is disproportionately directed not against the private sector, but against governments and elected office-holders – and moreover, not right-wingers, but against those perceived (horrors!) as 'liberals'" (ibid). This is only one of a series of apparent dichotomies which structure thinking about, and critique of,

mainstream journalism and news media: elite vs. popular, hard news vs. soft news, public interest vs. private profit, objective reporting vs. 'declared bias' or advocacy, event vs. context, mainstream vs. alternative. These dichotomies, of variable utility in themselves, are implicated in broad questions of value in journalism, and the fact that particular outlets and journalistic products are often difficult to locate solidly at one or another pole of each circumscribes and complicates the possibility of meaningfully defining both mainstream and alternative media.

Carroll and Hackett (2006: 24) further describe the ambivalent possibilities offered by the current (mainstream) media order in terms of both 'openings' (for pluralism and progressive change) and 'conservatizing pressures'. For example, individual journalists' political views (often liberal on social issues), some 'news values' (e.g. human interest or scandal), or "professional concepts of balance, fairness" (ibid) (where they are sincerely applied rather than simply asserted or employed shallowly to create that impression) may all provide 'openings.' "'[C]onservative' views on economic issues," "over-representation of affluent white males in decision-making positions," and "some practices of 'objectivity' – e.g. orientation to elite sources" may work against such openings. At the level of routine journalistic practice, the standard format requiring "'both sides' of a story" may provide an opening, whereas "institutional beats, prioritizing established institutions over the 'weak and unorganized' " may press in the other direction (24).

Benson and Neveu (2005: 5-6), working in an explicitly Bourdieusian framework, speak similarly of 'conservative effects' and 'dynamism,' noting that competition among practicing and aspiring journalists for a limited number of positions in the field is a potential source of dynamism (as opposed to those occupying established positions within the field of journalism who may serve to maintain existing standards, or the influence of economic or political imperatives which limit journalistic autonomy), a point to which I return.

Necessary competition among agents, they hold, may foster incentives for some to mark out distinct territory in media outlets which are new or located in a more marginal position relative to the field of large-scale (mainstream) production, a situation which may be all the more marked in the case of an influx of new agents with varying backgrounds (though over-competition may in turn foster conservative effects in that it can create economic pressures toward conformity with profit-imperatives).

Indeed, given that there are already 'openings' in the field of mainstream journalism (as well as conservatizing pressures or effects), it is important to emphasize that those actors *inside* the field necessarily grapple with the kinds of issues pointed out in critiques emanating from *outside* (or from the margins). Projects to redefine journalism have been emerging from within for some time – notably under the guise of 'public' or 'civic' journalism (e.g. Fallows 1996; Rosen 1999; Kovach and Rosenstiel 2007). One of the most prominent such calls, aimed at a journalism which "provides people with the information they need to be free and self-governing," and formulated following a series of workshops with working professionals, holds that journalists must be *truthful* and ensure *verification*, maintain *loyalty to citizens, independence from those they cover*, act as *monitors of power*, and provide *a forum for public criticism and compromise*; journalism should be *interesting, relevant, comprehensive*, and *proportional* and journalists ought to operate with *freedom of conscience* and bring to bear *the rights and responsibilities of citizens* (Kovach and Rosenstiel 2007).

More insight can be gleaned into the specific values – some as Janus-faced as the 'watchdog' role - through surveys of professionals which seek to define journalists' own criteria of quality, a number of which have been undertaken since the 1970s, and many of which have been helpfully summarized by Shapiro (2010). Ideal-type criteria of quality presented by Shapiro, considering only more recent results, include Kim and Meyer's

(2005) five categorical results from a survey of editors (*ease of use; localism; editorial vigor; news quantity; interpretation*), Shapiro *et al*'s (2006) ten criteria valued by journalism award jurors (*writing and storytelling technique* and *rigour in reporting* in the lead, followed by *originality; public impact and benefit to society; insight; analysis; balance or fairness; independence and integrity; transparency of method*), and Bogart's (2004) listing of terms favoured by US editors and journalists in describing press "excellence": *integrity, fairness, balance, accuracy, comprehensiveness, diligence of discovery, authority, breadth of coverage, variety of content, reflection of the entire home community, vivid writing, attractive makeup, packaging or appearance, easy navigability.*[33] Some among these emphasize an abiding concern with the public sphere and journalists' role in 'working for' a (perhaps somewhat idealized or flattened-out) democratic polity (e.g. Kovach and Rosentstiel); others seem more focused on the role of the journalist as an arbiter of competing sides or viewpoints (competent to impose standards of *fairness* and *balance*, even to *reflect the entire home community*) or as a writer, a stylistic savant, one who can make the product 'attractive.' In effect, a journalist has to be all of these things; the variety of quality markers, or specific cultural capitals available in the field of journalism, is broad and many of the ideals to which journalists appeal are difficult to denigrate – even for critics with an 'alternative' perspective. Many such ideals however, appear quite plastic in their generality.

Journalists are often highly reflexive subjects (though there is no shortage of unreflective journalism), and potential dynamism or positive change in the field of journalism arise in no small part from the reflections and experiments in practice of individuals who make their living as journalists. Many journalists do spend time (despite Zelizer's note that it is often eschewed) in formal training, and acknowledgment of the important social function of journalists' mediating and community-defining role lends some

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[33] *Italicized text* is terminology as appears verbatim in Shapiro's (2010) resume of key surveys of markers of quality among journalists and editors; see: pp. 147, 148, 149.

gravity to thinking about how journalism education should proceed. A number of academics and educators (Carey 2000; Skinner et al 2001; Gasher 2005; McVicker 2005; Nolan 2008; Hirst 2010) have sought, particularly in the past decade or so, to address what is sometimes characterized as an unreflective 'professional' approach to teaching the practice of journalism – that is, one which adheres perhaps too closely to the potentially problematic currents in mainstream journalism (especially its objectivist tendencies and commercial exigencies) and fails to more fully explore the necessarily perspectival and constructed nature of journalistic texts or the effects of media institutions on public life.

Specifically, in some circles, an emphasis on journalism research and 'scholarly' concern with the (un)democratic (or otherwise political) role of the press has been called out as a desirable contrast to vocational training which serves the "increasingly corporatized, commercialized, concentrated" news industry which "forsakes public service as a guiding principle"; as Gasher (2005: 665) puts it, "journalism schools must make a distinction between the news industry and journalism." Citing Cole C. Campbell, dean of the journalism school at University of Nevada-Reno, Gasher suggests that "journalism's ideals of producing information, criticism and understanding are 'synonymous' with those of the academy" (ibid). Increased scholarly attention to 'journalism studies', faculty with graduate-level academic training in cognate disciplines, problems with mainstream journalism (as projected by the 'news industry'), and "alternative media and media reform movements that are redefining what journalism is and can be" are singled out as contributing to a "push to transform journalism education – in Canada and elsewhere" (ibid: 666).

This concern is all the more pressing in the face of an immediate crisis of professional opportunity and security as precarity of labour conditions for professional journalists becomes the norm in an age of media concentration and convergence (Skinner and Gasher 2005; Compton 2010). For traditional print journalism, the situation is widely viewed as

particularly dire in light of "declining circulation, slumping advertising and classified revenue, stalled stock values, and an aging readership" (Compton 2010: 591). Evidence for a crisis of the financial model of mainstream news organizations has fuelled speculation that the newspaper is a 'dead' medium, that its demise is simply a matter of time. According to Philip Meyer (2009: 1-3), "the apocalypse" came down with the 2008-2009 financial crisis, which exacerbated long term trends – with US weekday circulation at its lowest since 1945 – and prompted financial restructuring, including significant layoffs, to become endemic to the industry (that is, moreso than in most other sectors).[34]

For individual journalists, the political economy of ownership convergence and competition with a proliferation of outlets for information online has forced them to contend with 'hyper-commercialism' in mainstream news organizations (McChesney 2004; Cooper 2005). The effects of media ownership concentration and convergence (heightening re-use of material across multiple outlets, including TV, radio, web and print, and forcing journalists to become jack-of-all-trades multi-media producers) and altered copyright conditions (tending to favor proprietary arrangements by which authors must surrender all intellectual property rights to obtain payment for their work) put individual journalists into heightened competition for what are often lesser (financial, and perhaps personal) rewards. Such trends can only contribute to what journalists themselves have identified as the main 'filter' on news: lack of institutional resources that would allow more sustained treatments and deeper investigation of news stories (Hackett et al 2000: 80).

The discussion in this section highlights the fact that even 'mainstream' or professional

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[34] Though we should note, as Compton (2010) points out, that when one considers the online editions of newspapers as well, declining circulation does not necessarily entail declining readership in the short term; although the online editions of many publications are not financed by subscription/sales, advertising revenues and cross-promotion with other media holdings (in the case of large media conglomerates) do accrue revenues. Other outlets are experimenting with reader-pay models, and – overall – the pressures of neoliberal rationalization are often brought to bear on outlets that actually remain profitable, just not to the degree desired by owners or shareholders.

journalism subscribes to ideals and relies on practices which provide 'openings' for pluralism and progressive change (potentially in concert with, rather than working against, social movements and activism); it also emphasizes the point that journalism itself is not a rigid entity, but rather socially negotiated within an 'interpretive community' (as emphasized by Zelizer and others, effectively describing – to put it in Bourdieusian language – the operations of actors in defining the field, its standards and stakes). It also notes important ideas about the role of journalism which arise in the field – and potentially provide 'openings' – but also suggests, given the fluidity of negotiation around such concepts as the 'watchdog' role, that journalism itself requires significant interpretation.

Finally, it is important to note that the field of journalism is contested – notably through such notions as the opposition between 'journalism' and 'news industry,' referring to a craft with many positive attributes (and noble ideals) in opposition to the profit-driven institutional contexts in which, unfortunately, much of the former's activity is bound to take place. Gasher's discussion of this distinction, focusing on the role of journalism education and the academy more generally, emphasizes the point that fields other than those of politics and the economy come into contact with, and seek to contest and influence both the internal operations and public perception of the field of journalism. The academy, as Bourdieu himself suggests (2005), is a significant player in a broader social struggle to define social realities and influence outcomes. As I suggest below, the actors in field of activism (the field in which social movements' efforts at framing challenges to established social conventions and representations, and to those occupying positions in the field of power, unfold) can also seek (and succeed) in exerting a significant influence on journalism. Indeed, in some instances, it may be useful to consider particular outlets as occupying liminal positions (i.e. in the margins between fields) vis-à-vis both activism and journalism, inclined to consider stakes and standards from each, blending the influences of both fields

in a hybridized form – with the priorities of one taking precedence at the expense of the other in particular moments and decisions (and complementing one another in others).

### *Alternative journalism: the liminal position of student jouralists*

Atton (2002) provides one of the most prominent and thorough academic efforts to explicitly theorize 'alternative media' as such (preferring this moniker), and subsequently, along with James F. Hamilton (Atton and Hamilton 2008) and in parallel (and mutual citation) with Tony Harcup (2003; 2005), to effectively outline what he calls 'alternative journalism' (e.g. Atton 2003; 2009). Alternative journalism is a notion which explicitly takes up the assertion that media production practices in 'alternative' venues are typically hybrid forms, drawing on the cultural resources furnished by existing practices (such as those emerging from professional journalism, as well as historic precedents and variants such as the non-objective reporting and stylistic innovations of the 1960s onwards) but functioning as *alternative(s)* to the mainstream. Atton (2009) indicates an opposition between the work of 'amateurs' and 'professionals' in suggesting that the practices of alternative media/alternative journalism should become the subject of academic attention:

> It is at the practices of alternative journalism that we should look most closely, not least because they raise challenges to the dominant practices of professionalized journalism. They offer a critique in action that can encourage educators, students and journalists to think epistemologically about journalism – an activity that has been found lacking in craft-based journalism programmes (Skinner et al, 2001). Alternative journalism suggests that authority does not need to be located institutionally or professionally; that credibility and trustworthiness can be derived from accounts of lived experience, not only from objectively detached reporting; and that there need be no imperative to separate facts from values (ibid: 284).

Yet, as Atton notes (ibid), there is already clear interchange between the activities of amateur and professional journalists; 'dominant' and 'alternative' journalisms exist in relation to one another. He is not the only one to point this out. Aside from the insistence of Hamilton (2008) on the "persistence, hybridity, and commonality of communications within specific historical conditions," we may note that Harcup (2005), for example, emphasizes

that many individuals get their start in 'alternative' outlets, and move into the 'mainstream' as professionals – bringing their ideologies, values and practices with them (however much these may be constrained in the institutional environment of mainstream publications). Indeed, many journalists simultaneously work at both 'mainstream' and 'alternative' outlets, and many outlets (though they may be commercially-oriented, to varying extents) are almost undecideably hybridized, practicing innovative and politically progressive journalism which attends to voices less well-treated in most mainstream dailies (including those of social movement constituents and activists) and stakes out a strong critical position. Benson (2003), for example, has called attention to the ambivalent media politics of some US alternative-weekly newspapers which may well champion oppositional viewpoints, project otherwise unheard voices, and act as both allies for social movement constituents and critical outlets in their own right. Indeed, as Eliasoph (1989) points out, entities with an explicitly 'alternative' political agenda, such as San Francisco's KPFA radio, employ news forms and production practices which bear a great deal of resemblance to those of mainstream professional journalists, but with a particular political inflection which determines sourcing and framing of stories. All of these examples suggest a blurring of the line between mainstream and alternative forms. They also suggest an array of positions in and around the field of journalism which are inflected by a variety of influences other than (or differently configured in relative position to) those which affect mainstream production.

Atton and Hamilton (2008: 133-134) suggest that alternative journalism may be seen to operate in liminal spaces, those between established fields (such as those of activism and journalism) or between sub-fields (e.g. large-scale and small-scale production). They suggest that the space between such (sub-)fields is increasingly populated with works and the actors who produce them, and marked by interchange (and incorporation, as well as positive innovation); a concrete example would be the "professionalization and

normalization of blogs" (Atton and Hamilton 2008: 134), with the latter indicating a relatively new (and sometimes seemingly overwhelming) influx of entrants to the margins of the journalistic field which has prompted wider changes (see Bruns 2005).

I wish to suggest that student journalism has long occupied the kind of liminal space pointed to by Atton and Hamilton. Student newspapers, in my view, hover between the kind of consecration which might accrue to a professional publication and the absence of same one might expect in the case of, say, a Xeroxed 'zine which happens to cover campus events. Neither professionals nor total amateurs (at least in the case of the experienced and often very capable editors of large student publications such as the *Link* and *Daily*), student journalists are in a sort of liminal flux. In both the scope of the audience they reach and the expectation of quality (which, for detractors, is often set in terms of a need to be 'objective' rather than 'biased'), they sit somewhere between the large-scale publications of the mainstream and the DIY efforts of zinesters, movement-based publishing and the more 'amateur' among alternative journalists. Student newspapers certainly are not the equivalents of large centralized commercial news organizations, but neither are they an ad hoc enterprise. Some may respond by seeking the authority that may be derived from mirroring professional practices; others, however, may choose instead to critique them and try to do things differently. In any case, the enterprise for student journalists involves taking positions relative to others in the field of journalism, and defending them if necessary.

Those who tend towards a strong critique of the mainstream, as 'news industry' or in terms of important aspects of the 'regime of objectivity,' and engage in 'alternative journalism,' highlighting different perspectives, issues and events, through particular practices of sourcing, framing and presentation, challenge the authority of those in the mainstream. By doing so from a position which continues to lay claim to 'journalism' in naming their activity, and by attending to various of the standards of form and criteria of

quality which are held up by mainstream journalists, student journalists can potentially be seen as engaging in a kind of hybrid/alternative journalism which is both journalism in the sense practiced by many professionals (seeking to draw out the best of those standards and practices) and something else.

Much as the 'youth' (especially students) of the generations of the recent past have at times challenged their elders at a broad societal level, questioning the authority of established practices – not least in the case of the baby-boom generation (e.g. Ricard 1993) which spawned the 'new journalism' and kicked off the university press' career as "agent of social change" (Lemon 2004) - student journalists may act as a force for dynamism, exploiting the structural 'opening' offered by the very existence of student newspapers. Indeed, Bourdieu's field theory (1993) and Benson and Neveu's (2005) overview of its application to journalism specifically posit that new entrants into a field can be a source of dynamism. In a professional environment, the dynamic influence of new entrants may be subject to the 'conservatizing pressure' of economic imperatives and competition to please employers and secure payment for work; in an environment such as a student newspaper, however, participants are relatively unconstrained by the force exerted by the economic field and unlikely to be concerned about cultivating sources in positions of political power (beyond the level of the university, at least).

Yet staff at student newspapers, as individuals with a stake in the *illusio* common to the field of journalism, still identify with and appeal to standards and ideals rooted in established journalism, and draw on the cultural resources of established journalistic practice to mount their challenge. Many are also likely to bring in their own personal political commitments, including those associated with social movements and activism, which (along with the influence of the academic field, perhaps all the more so for those pursuing formal training in journalism) set up another field of influence, likely to be

stronger in that the influence of the 'field of power' (to which mainstream journalism is more closely tied) is lesser, and these others more proximate. Such considerations, I posit, may turn on attempts to deconsolidate the sub-field of mainstream journalism (closer to the pole of large-scale production), rescuing what journalists *should* do from what many, constrained by the vagaries of the 'news industry' *actually* do.[35]

Importantly, challenges to the mainstream arise not only from *within* the field of journalism (e.g. by asserting a more 'pure' and rigorous deployment of the specific cultural capitals which mark quality against the debased practices of the mainstream, though this is an important aspect of critique), but from the influences of adjacent fields – in this case, and for present purposes, primarily that of activism (though also the academy). This is why I see student journalism as occupying a liminal position, one which highlights the hybridity of media production practices and the indistinctness of the border between 'mainstream' and 'alternative.'

The persistence (and flourishing) of student papers strikes me as an important means to open up such liminal spaces in the field of journalism – spaces which are neither scale-models of the mainstream press nor direct communications outlets for social movement constituents and activist groups (who may at times seem to preach too much to the converted). In this sense, I will suggest from the outset that student newspapers, should they appear to accomplish this, would certainly contend for consideration as 'alternative media' – *in a sense greater than simply providing a source for information which is not a* mainstream daily or network broadcast. Of course, whether or not that space is fought for, and whether it is used in particular ways depends on a combination of the individuals involved, the institutional culture (including whatever institutional memory exists in the overlap of a constantly rotating cast of players, the history or the paper, and the guiding

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[35] Of course, student journalists may (like others) fail to live up to their own standards, or the best standards of journalism, alternative or otherwise.

documents – always subject to interpretation), and the climate of contestation or quietism in which such actors find themselves.

At papers such as the *Link* and the *Daily*, where both guiding documents and an institutional identity tied up with the social movements of the past (Chapter 3) encourage it, the proclivity to challenge and innovate is strong – albeit differently negotiated by the range of individuals and changing ensembles on the editorial board according to the circumstances in which they find themselves. Whether by challenging the mainstream directly (Chapter 4), seeking to articulate their own normative orientations and negotiating the tension between more 'professional' and 'activist' (or 'alternative') standards, or by offering portrayals of social movements and protest events which counter some of the more nefarious aspects of mainstream coverage (Chapter 6), student journalists contend with a difficult task, riven with tensions. Perhaps the difficulty of the endeavor (at least for those unable to remain unreflective about the power of media and journalism as it refracts the influences and accounts arising from other social fields through its own prism) is endemic to the task. As Bromley and O'Malley (cited in Zelizer 2004: 205) suggest:

> [Journalists] emerge as a group of people uncertain about how useful their work is or how acceptable they are as a group. [...] Unlike other activities, there is something about journalism which is permanently troubled and contradictory.

# 2.

## *Methodological Considerations: data sources and treatment*

The analysis which follows in Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6 consists primarily in presenting a critical reading through themes, of work which emerged over the course of the past decade on the pages of the *Link* and *Daily*, as well as of the reflections of student editors from this period (gathered in a series of interviews), drawing occasionally on other available documentation to situate and further draw out these selected themes (which are outlined in the introduction, and reiterated below). In sum, I seek to examine how student journalists negotiate their liminal or ambivalent position relative to professional (mainstream) journalism (especially ideals of 'objectivity' or 'balance') in light of commitments to an 'activist' role which takes up the legacy of the student press as 'agent of social change'; that is, how the *Link* and the *Daily* report (and comment) on the news, and so challenge mainstream media and articulate their own (individual and collective) orientations and role in putting out a student newspaper. In so doing, I present a selective history of the two publications which indicates both the difficulty and promise latent in a student press which seeks to differentiate itself on the margins of the field of journalism.

The analysis and exposition in this thesis relies primarily on two types of data: content appearing in the *Link* and *McGill Daily* 2000-2010 (with a handful from 1999, given the papers' publishing cycle, which runs September-April), and interviews with former editors of the respective papers. Additionally, so as to provide background and supplementary information related to the publications, I have consulted their guiding documents (constitution, bylaws, the *Daily*'s Statement of Principles and the *Link*'s Mandate, and AGM minutes made available by the *Daily* Publication Society)[36] and the Delegate Binders

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[36] See especially Chapters 3 and 5; I should note that DPS minutes tend to be extremely brief and schematic (largely recording formal resolutions of an administrative nature). Minutes for the Link Publication Society were not provided.

prepared for each Canadian University Press annual conference 2002-2010[37] (which

provide information on the contributions and activities of the respective papers at CUP).[38]

Provisions regarding journalistic ethics and the political mission of the respective papers

(and of CUP) are particularly relevant in orienting discussion of normative journalistic

orientations among student journalists in Chapter 4.

I also consulted all content appearing in the Montreal *Gazette* which specifically

references either the *Link* or the *Daily* anywhere in the text; these articles (and letters to the

editor), retrieved via ProQuest's Canadian Newsstand database, which carries a complete

listing of the *Gazette* for the period of reference, allowed me to further contextualize the

publications by noting their treatment in Montreal's only mass-circulation English-language

daily – some of this content is featured in Chapter 3. Finally, to facilitate both the

quantitative measures based on a content analysis briefly summarized in Chapter 6 (on

variables including sourcing and valence)[39] and a broader consideration of the tone and

presentation of coverage dealing with specific protest events (associated with anti-

globalization and anti-police brutality movements) discussed in more detail with respect to

the efforts of the *Link* and *Daily*, I also examine coverage of these events which appeared in

the *Gazette*. At numerous points throughout this work, supplementary information on

pertinent facts, persons or events are cited not only from the academic literature, but from a

variety of newspapers and other sources.


### *Content from the Link and the McGill Daily*

As noted, one of the main sources of data relied upon here is the content of the *Link* and

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[37] I was unable to obtain those for 2000-2002; for those I was able to consult, I must thank 2009-2010 CUP President Rob Fishbook.

[38] See Chapter 3.

[39] For detailed methodological considerations related to the quantitative analysis, which arose in the context of a stand-alone paper written in December 2009, see Appendix 3; a summary of the study and results appear at the beginning of Chapter 6. It examines 121 articles, 73 from the Gazette.

the *McGill Daily*, particularly news (and news analysis), features, editorials and comment by editorial staff.[40] The newspapers produced for the period of reference were consulted in hard copy at the Concordia University archives (which keeps every *Link* issue produced, including inserts, in its collection) and the McGill University library (where bound volumes of past editions of the *Daily* are available),[41] and articles relevant to selected themes were copied:

1. the public self-presentation of the respective papers' history and identity
2. their social and political role vis-à-vis social movements and activism,
3. journalistic orientations and ideals (professionalism vs. activism)
4. critique of mainstream media and journalism,
5. protest event coverage and commentary (anti-globalization, anti-police brutality)

All articles were first read to orient my thinking with regard to the variety of issues and treatments of the subject matter relevant to these themes, and prominent continuities, discontinuties and tensions which thus came to my attention – and prominent stories and events which evoked important aspects of these themes (notably the ongoing critique of CanWest in Chapter 4, the *Link*'s crisis in 2000-2001, discussed in Chapter 5, and the range of coverage afforded to anti-globalization in 2001 and the Annual March Against Police Brutality throughout the decade) – became the focus of more detailed analysis. In many cases, I subsequently went back to confirm that I had as much relevant content as could be located on hand; I also undertook additional research, including interviews targeted to individuals with knowledge of prominent events of interest, in order to shore up narrative and factual accounts which would allow me to discuss them effectively.

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[40] I.e. opinion pieces other than unsigned editorials attributed to persons having held editorial positions, especially coordinating editors or editors-in-chief or persons holding more than one year of editorial tenure. These are of particular interest in that they represent the views of persons who had significant roles in the production of the papers; given that unsolicited comment pieces by students otherwise unconnected with the paper's operations are often published (a strength of their role as a venue for debate and the expression of students' views, but one which introduces a range of opinion which may not reflect the papers' staff), I have generally sought to disregard these except in the aforementioned cases or where the writer is a regular columnist.

[41] Though, at the time of my initial research, the library's collection did not include the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 volumes, I was able to obtain these from 2009-2010 Daily coordinating editor Stephen Davis, whom I thank for his assistance on this matter.

In total, the analysis presented in this thesis cites 115 discrete articles from the *Link* and the *Daily* (67 from the former and 48 from the latter), from a total of over 500 copied and read (in addition to those examined onsite at Concordia and McGill) out of a corpus of over 300 issues of the *Link* and over 450 of the *McGill Daily*. Indirect or passing reference is made to numerous others. Inevitably, not all articles relevant to a given theme, topic or incident are cited here; I have sought to present a selection which illustrates both commonality and variety, mitigating to some degree the inevitable exclusions by taking up a critical reading of a wide range of pieces, and by treating many of them in some depth. Articles are cited in footnotes (as are interviews, internal documents and articles from mainstream media such as the *Gazette*), as this method allows the reader to note authors, dates and titles (relevant contextual information which cannot easily be accommodated in the text of the analysis) without consulting a cumbersome reference list at the end of the work.

Inevitably, the selection cited is a product of my own judgment (much as the specific content of a given news story is largely the product of the judgment of journalists and their editors); I have sought, insofar as possible, to demonstrate the variety of content which marks the two publications, within the scope of my selected themes. In many instances, I have subjected particular articles (or sequences based around these themes) to close readings and/or presented their content in some detail. While this may at times take the reader along what appears to be a circuitous route (or to dwell on detail, and in the words of The *Link* and *Daily*'s writers), it is difficult to convey the tone and variety in the writers' work without taking the reader down this path. It has been my aim to document, connect and critically appraise the content of the two newspapers in a way that both furnishes a reasonably broad understanding and highlights key examples.

*Interviews*

Interviewing for this project ended with a total of 28 interviews (representing 27 individuals): 14 were interviewed in person and 13 by telephone, with one of the latter interviewed on two separate occasions. Interviews ranged from approximately 25 minutes to over one hour in length, with the majority falling between 35 and 45 minutes. All took place in the months of January, February, March and April 2010.

All interviewees have at some point held editorial positions with the *Link* or *McGill Daily*. Given the number of people involved in producing a student newspaper (let alone two, over the course of a decade), I decided to select individuals who had made the most significant commitments and been most involved in not only producing content, but in managing production, especially of news. Prospective interviewees were selected primarily via a purposive sampling procedure, privileging 1) coordinating editors/editors in chief and 2) news editors/coordinating news editors, with particular priority given to individuals who had occupied one of these positions and at least one other. Individuals meeting these criteria within the period of reference (2000-2010) were contacted, where possible, by email, telephone or via the social networking site Facebook (which made this significantly easier). Many either failed to respond to initial contact or ceased response after an initial reply; interviews were arranged with those who did respond positively, to take place at a time of their choosing. Subsequently, an unplanned (but welcome) snowball sample developed, as interviewees recommended others whom they believed would be interested and/or interesting and provided contact information. In addition to this supplement, further priority was given in the selection of later interviews to persons having held positions (1) or (2) for years where no interviewee had yet been recruited.[42] In some cases,

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[42] Due primarily to snowball sampling, I found myself with a significant concentration of Daily editors from 2000-2003 early on; this, in part, prompted the large number of interviews as I sought to ensure that every year in the period of reference was covered. In the end, 13 editors from the Link

due to snowball sampling or an interest in speaking with a particular individual (based on the relevance of their writing or presence at a particular moment in time to the themes pursued in the analysis), interviewees were chosen from among former occupants of other editorial positions. Only three interviewees fit into this category.

All interviewees were given the opportunity to keep their identity confidential; in fact, this was the default procedure from the outset. However, after some interviewees expressed a preference for being identified, the ethics procedure was modified to provide the option to participants. Interviews were recorded on a digital recording device (employing a phone jack for telephone interviews), supplemented by notes, and recordings were were selectively transcribed based on my own evaluation of thematic relevance and particularity. Each interviewee was asked a series of questions, based on a prepared schedule[43] employing a semi-structured format, taking the schedule as a guide, but allowing for improvised follow-up and for questions to be dropped if related subject matter had been adequately addressed, or for reasons of time. Ultimately, the range of questions asked exceeded what I was able to include and effectively address in this thesis, and the large amount of interview data means that a wealth of transcribed material of interest awaits further analysis. In retrospect, I must concede that a more focused interview schedule (and perhaps a more limited number of interviewees) would have facilitated completing the project more quickly; nonetheless, I should note that the development of my ideas and line of questioning benefited from a larger number of interviews, that my general sense of the variability of normative orientations among individuals and at different moments at the respective publications benefited enormously, and that a number of very productive

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and 14 from the Daily were interviewed, including 7 coordinating editors from each paper, and there is no year within the period of reference in which no interviewee held an editorial position.
[43] See Appendix 2 for a sample interview schedule which represents a version revised in light of the development of more specific themes and topics of interest which arose in light of early interviews and analysis of content from the newspapers.

interviews were among the last conducted.

Transcribed interview data was scrutinized and compared, with special attention to responses pertinent to the evolving foci of the chapters which have come together here (organized around the noted themes): discussions of 'objectivity' or 'balance' and its alternatives, of the political identity and ethos of the respective papers, of relations with and orientations towards social movements or activism and journalistic 'professionalism', and regarding specific events or situations of interest such as the crisis at the *Link* in 2000-2001 (Chapter 5) or coverage of the 2001 Summit of the Americas (Chapter 6). Wherever possible, I have sought to cite interviewees at some length, in order to best reflect the nuance that arises in discussion more detailed than one- or two-line quotations.

Where interviewees chose not to have their identities kept confidential, I have named those cited; in cases where confidentiality was assured, I have simply noted the newspaper and a year (the last of their tenure), so as to contextualize the comment in general terms – e.g. "one *Link* editor, ca. 2005." While I had entertained the idea of employing pseudonyms (which might better allow readers to trace the views of particular individuals as they recur in the text without specifically identifying them), I concluded that doing so throughout the work posed a problem for confidentiality given the limited pool of persons from which interviewees were drawn; such continuity of (pseudonymous) identification, in short, would be too likely to allow those knowledgeable about the papers to surmise the actual identities of participants who agreed to participate on condition of confidentiality. Only briefly in some limited sections, where it was both necessary for readability and posed little concern on this count, have I employed pseudonyms. Interviews are cited, as with articles from newspapers and internal documents, in footnotes.

# CHAPTER 3

## Locating the Link and McGill Daily:
## present, past, lieux du memoire

*A student newspaper can raise more hell on a college campus than spiked punch at the dean's reception for freshmen women.*

- Dwight Bentel, writing in *Editor & Publisher*, 1949

### Introduction

This chapter introduces and situates the *Link* and the *Daily*, beginning with details regarding the scale (in terms of budget and circulation) and operations of the two papers, followed by an introduction to the direction offered by key guiding documents. Having presented these details and the documents which continue orient the two publications, I present – in lieu of a history which has not yet appeared elsewhere – an extended critical reading of retrospective writing which appears on their pages (and occasionally, elsewhere) from 2000 to 2010, treating the written accounts of the papers' respective pasts as *lieux du memoire* (Nora: 1989). I present those instances I was able to locate in which the trials and tribulations of both titles are discussed or mentioned with reference to their prior instantiations, including three anniversary issues of the *Link* (which compile alumni reminiscence and recall formative or remarkable events), similar retrospectives from the *Daily*, a series of articles which appeared in the *Link*, *Daily* and Montreal *Gazette* reminding readers of the *Daily*'s storied past as it faced a student referendum on its fate in 2008, and a series of features dealing with the history of student activism and protest at their respective institutions (in connection with which writers typically turn up a '*Link* angle' or a '*Daily* angle' to include themselves in these larger histories).

These stories set the stage for later discussion by presenting some idea of the context of the *Link* and *Daily* beyond the period of reference (that is, a sense of history and what little

exists of institutional memory), by evoking the variety of perspectives (and tensions) which may be brought to bear on a student newspaper, and by emphasizing the recurrent (if not untroubled) identification of the papers with social movements and activism. Finally, in concluding this chapter, I return to events within the period of reference to point out that the *Link* and *Daily* have histories together, as well as apart, and that identification with a left-wing political mission for the student press, carrying on the ethos generated in the 'agent of social change' era of CUP, continues to be apparent (and to differentiate the two from many other student publications) in more recent years.

### The Link and The McGill Daily: history, guiding documents, operations

Both the *Link* and McGill *Daily* exist as print publications with significant institutional histories, and are two of the largest publications in Canadian University Press, in terms of both budget and circulation. The *Link* and *Daily* represent two of thirteen CUP member papers registering budgets over $180,000 annually (The *Daily* being one of ten registering a budget over $220,000).[44] Print runs are, respectively, 11,000 per issue[45] for the bi-weekly *Daily*, for a combined 28,000 weekly[46] with its once-weekly French-language sister publication, *Le Délit*, and 10,000 for weekly editions of the *Link*.[47]

Actual pickup or readership is, however, not clear. The *Link*, in published materials intended for potential advertisers, claims 85% readership among students, reaching "over 30,000 students and 5,000 faculty".[48] These numbers, however, apparently come from a

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[44] "Members List." Internal CUP document, n.d. [updated late 2009]
[45] http://mcgilldaily.com/Advertising
[46] http://mcgilldaily.com/About%20us;
   this is down from 33,000 combined weekly circulation declared in 2002. See:
   "McGill Daily Seeks Students' Support." *McGill Daily*, 21/2/2002: 5.
[47] http://www.thelinknewspaper.ca/advertise
[48] ibid.

CUP readership survey,[49] which I have been unable to obtain – and it is unclear as to whether they refer to weekly, monthly, or annual 'reach'; most interviewees professed no knowledge of actual readership, though several suggested that roughly half of printed editions were typically picked up from distribution points around campus, though on occasion this proportion could be significantly higher. Pickup at off-campus distribution points in bars, restaurants and music shops near campuses and in the Plateau neighborhood (at 70 locations in the case of the *Link*, up dramatically due to a recent effort on the part of business staff) is also difficult to gauge. The *Daily*, for its part, describes itself as "[c]urrently the second-largest student newspaper in Canada and the most widely read,"[50] and one former editor notes that in the early 2000s, its editors took it as point of pride that it was also the most-syndicated in CUP.[51] Regardless of precise numbers on pickup and readership, it is clear that both are major players in the field of student media and that their readership is not insignificant – in CUP, only the Ubyssey (UBC) claims larger print-runs than the *Daily*, and only four papers (including the *Daily*) claim larger runs than the *Link*.[52]

Both the *Daily* and the *Georgian* (a predecessor to the *Link*) are, as noted in Chapter 1, founding members of CUP, and instrumental in the installation of the historic 'agent of social change' clause (Lemon 2004). Their guiding documents, key portions of which are noted in the following sections, set out a political mission for the papers which echoes in their history – a history which is selectively presented in the remainder of this chapter, as is a brief resume outlining their continued involvement in CUP.

The guiding documents and institutional structure of both (incorporated as non-profit corporations under the auspices of the *Link* and *Daily* Publication Societies, respectively, and governed officially by the Board of Directors of said societies, though officially

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[49] Confidential source. Personal Interview, March, 2010.
[50] http://mcgilldaily.com/About%20us
[51] Nestruck, Kelly. Telephone interview, February 2010.
[52] See the end of this section for discussion of the significant role both play in CUP.

accountable to their membership, which includes all undergraduate students in the case of The *Link*, and all students, with some exceptions[53] in the case of the *Daily*) explicitly underline their formal and de facto independence from the student unions and administration at their institutions, and this independence (a key value officially promoted by CUP) is jealously guarded in light of the position that a free and independent student press represents the optimal arrangement.

Any student may contribute content to either paper, provided that their contribution meets certain criteria (related to explicit policies of non-discrimination, excluding sexism, racism, etc.) and meets with the approval of editors. In both cases, guiding documents mandate that the papers are obligated to publish at least one letter per member of the society per issue, and recent custom appears to hold that opinion/commentary pages exist as a forum for students (i.e. that a range of opinion be allowed to appear in print, notwithstanding the views of editors), not only with respect to letters, but to other contributions as well. Members of the *Link* and *Daily* Publication Societies may become voting staff (entitled to vote in the election of editors and in connection with other internal decisions) after having contributed, in the case of the *Daily*, six articles, photos, or production nights (or 12 hours of 'other duties'), and in the case of The *Link*, at least one article, photo or graphic (or contributing three hours of other work) to a minimum of four issues in a given semester.

Both papers are financed in large part by student fee-levies, collected directly along with tuition payment by the universities.[54] Additionally, as much as 50% (or even slightly

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[53] I.e. members of the MacDonald Campus Student Society, non-resident and full-time teaching graduate students, and continuing education students, any of whom may choose to voluntarily join the Society (at which point they are expected to contribute the normal fee).

[54] Link Publication Society. "The Link Publication Society Mandate," last updated June 2009;
   Link Publication Society. "Bylaws of The Link Publications Society," last updated April 2, 2008;
   Daily Publication Society. "Constitution," last updated April 14, 2008;
   Daily Publication Society. "Bylaw 1: Name, Object and Structure and Procedures of the Daily

more) of the paper's operating budgets may be derived from advertising revenues; according to one source, however, The *Link* (and therefore likely the *Daily* as well) have recently suffered from precipitous declines in ad revenue following the financial crisis of 2008-9. Fee levies may occasionally be increased via student referenda, and this mode of financing offers an opportunity to be relatively less constrained by reliance on advertising, but also leaves the papers potentially vulnerable to student- or administration-initiated initiatives targeting their levies.

### The Link

Concordia University was officially founded through the 1974 merger and rechristening of Sir George Williams University (a Protestant institution associated with the YMCA, itself founded in 1926 and established as a university in 1959) and Loyola College (a Catholic college which for most of its institutional lifespan was an all-boys school), which culminated from six years of committees and negotiations (and a longer period of speculation).[55] The school is sometimes referred to colloquially as Montreal's 'other' university, a reference to a perceived differential in status between the two English-language institutions in the city. The first issue of the *Link* – "Concordia's independent student newspaper" – appeared August 22, 1980, following the merger of two papers which had been cultivated in the respective pre-merger institutions for some time prior. The *Loyola News* had been publishing since 1924, and The *Georgian* since 1936; they saw their final issues, respectively, on April 3 and April 11, 1980. As the following treatment of how the *Link* represents its history and identity over the period of reference indicates, the paper has long had (in various permutations) an 'activist' or left-wing orientation. For the

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Publication Society," n.d.
[55] http://archives3.concordia.ca/timeline/histories/merger.html

purposes of introduction, it may suffice to cite the *Link* Publication Society Mandate, which

sets out the primary functions of the paper, in full:

> The *Link* is an independent, student-run, not-for-profit newspaper at Concordia University in Montreal, Quebec. The *Link* aims to publish stories usually not covered by mainstream media. With a focus on advocacy journalism, contributors cover stories about student life, as well as local, national, and international issues of interest to Concordia and Montreal communities.
>
> The *Link* is a progressive entity with a staff that believes in tolerance and promotes a positive message of diversity and equality. The *Link* has a tradition of advocating for people and groups who are marginalized, oppressed, voiceless, or simply rendered invisible because of the nature of their situation. There has long been a commitment to sharing stories that might not otherwise be shared publically.
>
> The *Link* is a learning space. Everyone is a volunteer who learned what they know about the newspaper and its practices from another volunteer, and everyone has a responsibility to pass along their knowledge. The *Link* is a venue for writers, photographers, designers and artists to hone their skills and gain experience by working with the newspaper's staff.
>
> Although the *Link* is primarily a print publication, its staff embraces new media and incorporates the internet and other tools wherever possible in order to reach a wider audience and offer more to *Link* readers.
>
> Contributors to The *Link* can expect to pursue their work in a safe and civil environment. There is no tolerance for any form of discrimination; be it racism, homophobia, sexism, or xenophobia.

Although this document is merely a schematic outline of some of the main directions that

the *Link* is collectively mandated to pursue, the considerations raised here – particularly the

political mission and opposition to the mainstream implied, are revisited in what follows.


### The McGill Daily

McGill University was founded in 1821 with the resolution of lawsuits seeking to block

the execution of a Scottish entrepreneur's bequest of funds and the now-downtown

territory on which the university is built; its early history (and current reputation) is

significantly tied to faculties of medicine and law (James and Frost 1999), and more

recently, it has benefited from a reputation in some circles which places it as a decidedly

more elite academic institution than Concordia. Indeed, the Times Higher Education

Supplement rankings[56] prompted the Montreal *Gazette* to describe it in 2007 as "the cream of Canadian schools, the best public university in North America [...] 12th among the world's top 200 universities."[57] The *McGill Daily* began life in 1911, and holds a place as one of the oldest student newspapers in Canada (as they are fond of noting, though the Dalhousie *Gazette*, founded in 1868, was practically middle-aged by 1911). The *Daily*, like the *Link*, has a persistent tendency towards a left-wing orientation sometimes out of step with the institution's elite, and somewhat conservative, reputation. At times, if the RCMP is to be believed, it has even been under the sway of hard-core Maoists;[58] of course, the political orientation of the paper (as with most) has oscillated over the years, at times quite conservative (once having been under the editorial supervision of notorious neo-con Charles Krauthammer), but as the remainder of this chapter indicates, the *Daily* generally views itself as a left-wing bastion. In introducing the paper, I will do as I did above in citing, in full, the *Daily*'s Statement of Principles, which plays a roughly analogous role to the Mandate of The *Link* Publication Society:

> 2.1 The fundamental goal of The *McGill Daily* shall be to serve as a critical and constructive forum for the exchange of ideas and information about McGill University and related communities.
> 2.2 Within this optic, the staff of The *Daily* recognizes that all events and issues are inherently political, involving relations of social and economic power. Further, we recognize that at present power is unevenly distributed, especially (but not solely) on the basis of gender, age, social class, race, sexuality, religion, disability, and cultural identity. We also recognize that keeping silent about this situation helps to perpetuate inequality. To help correct these inequities, to the best of its staff's abilities, The *Daily* should depict and analyze power relations accurately in its coverage.

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[56] Of course, such ranking are highly contested, and can vary wildly between surveys; it is in no way my intention to suggest that such rankings are adequate, only that there is a commonly-perceived differential in academic prestige. Notably, Concordia has yet to place in the top 200 in any prominent listing, and has generally been unhappy with rankings it receives – notably those in Maclean's Magazine, whose annual survey it officially withdrew from in 2006, citing well-founded reservations regarding purposes and methodology, backing their claims with reference to principles defined by the UNESCO-founded International Ranking Expert Group. See:
http://mediarelations.concordia.ca/pressreleases/archives/2006/08/concordia_withdraws_from_m
    acle.php
[57] Curran, Peggy. "McGill tops on continent: global survey." Montreal Gazette, 08/10/2007.
[58] Not recently.

2.3 As an autonomous student newspaper, relatively free from commercial and other controls, The *Daily* can best serve its purposes by examining issues and events most media ignore. In particular, it should deal with the role post-secondary education plays in constructing and maintaining the current order. It should also assist students and other groups working for change in a critical framework, with the aim of empowering and giving a voice to individuals and communities marginalized on the basis of the criteria mentioned in section 2.2. The *Daily*'s methods should be both educative and active, and determined democratically by its staff.

2.4 Finally, we recognise that The *Daily* must remain accessible to the student community it comes from, and should abide by an ethic of fairness while maintaining its autonomy.

As this and the chapters which follow inevitably trace out a great deal about the self-definitions, histories (predominantly recent in later chapters), and normative orientations of the *Daily*, as well as the *Link*, I shall proceed without further ado, leaving this introduction to orient the reader as to the basic operations and the 'official' mission of the paper.

### Papers of record, lieux du memoire: telling stories about the past

Both the *Link* and *Daily* have at times initiated retellings of their respectively storied pasts on the pages of their own newspapers. Such accounts provide a patchwork narrative which outlines key themes and events, and like all narratives (including news stories), they inevitably rely on a process of selection and presentation which reveals not only the past, but how it is conceptualized or framed by the student journalists involved (in these cases, often including not only present but also past staffers at the *Link* and *Daily*). Predictably, these accounts also include stories about their respective universities or about students (and notably, student activists) more broadly, often interwoven with historic references to their own publications. As more than one interviewee suggested, student journalists at the *Link* and *Daily* will tend to seek out a 'Concordia' or 'McGill angle' to stories centered outside the university; in historic accounts of their immediate institutional surroundings and the society in which they are embedded, they often seek a '*Link*' or '*Daily* angle' as well. In many

cases, these stories also elaborate connections with activism and wider social movements, underlining the 'alternative' self-conception of the publications.

Rather than provide an expansive account of the papers' respective pasts from 'official histories' (which is no real option in any case) or directly from the archived issues of past decades, this section draws on a selection of retellings of the more-or-less distant past from the *Link* and *Daily*, 2000-2010 – retellings which often connect, or at least inflect, past events with present concerns – as a means both of presenting the history of the papers beyond the immediate scope defined by the period of reference for this thesis, and of presenting this history through a lens characterized by that very period. In so doing, I present some of the contents of this much more recent archive as *lieux de memoire* (Nora 1989), sites of what is ultimately not quite history and not quite memory, sites "that anchor, condense, and express the exhausted capital of our collective memory" (ibid: 24), or, in this case, more specifically, that of the perpetually changing population which resides temporarily in the offices of the *Link* and *McGill Daily* (as presented to their readers).

The *Link*, to provide an initial example, has published anniversary issues marking 20, 25 and 30 years from its inception. Given that these anniversary issues compile and recount key events and copy that went to print, alongside a series of reactions from past writers and editors, these are a good place to look in seeking to illuminate how then-current staff thought about and related to the larger historical context of the paper. Reviewing these issues here (along with a 2008 *Daily* retrospective of similar sort) allows a look at the identity and public face of the papers in historic context, as presented by staff. While not everyone will tell the same story about the paper and its history (much as many tend to diverge in describing the mission and normative orientations of the student press in the present), the accounts rendered here offer a good venue to begin exploring.

The *Link*'s 20th anniversary issue coincides with the first year of this thesis' period of reference, and gathers accounts from past and then-present editors and revisits the history of the paper, with a particular focus on the 1980 merger between the *Loyola News* and the *Georgian*. That initial merger occurred six years after the official merger of Sir George Williams University and Loyola College gave rise to Concordia, and not long after the formation of the Concordia University Students Association, which subsequently balked at funding two papers at a time few campus papers (and neither of these two) were autonomous of their student unions. Many of the pieces included are by *Link* alumni from that period. Philip Authier, an early *Link* editor in 1981-82 recalls attempting to run two offices (one on each of the campuses, downtown and in NDG) to respect the traditions of the two founding papers, a balancing act which mirrored a broader tension – "the fact that many people on campus had never digested the merger idea." He also recalls "a student council breathing down our neck," a rush to revamp the business side of the operation, and "trying to shore up the paper's credibility."[59]

On a different note, former *Link* editors (and contributors to the final year's editions of the *Georgian* and the *Loyola News*) Danny Kucharsky and John Tourneur recall that their last visit to the *Link*'s offices (ca. 1982) saw them using typewriters, yet conclude that twenty years of technological innovation has had little impact: "We see stuff on the story board about sick building syndrome in the VA building, Rosie Douglas of computer riot fame, orientation, anti-poverty, and the bloody malfunctioning escalators...a lot of the same stuff we wrote about."[60]

One of paper's first editors, for his part, presents the *Link*'s beginnings as beset by a political challenge. Next to the ever-present challenge of putting out a paper with limited

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[59] Curran, Peggy and Phil Authier. "Respecting disparate traditions." *The Link*, 26/9/2000: 14.
[60] Kucharsky, Danny and John Tourneur. "Plus ca change: The Link is the same old beast." *The Link*, 21/9/2000: 13.

human and financial resources, to which were added the challenge of molding a

reconstituted paper Doug Leslie retrospectively identified a certain political malaise:

> A bigger problem was that the issues of the day were also going through a rebuilding process. After the tumult of the 60s and early 70s, what did the early 80s have to challenge us? It seemed there were fewer all-caps ISSUES during that time (post-Vietnam, pre-AIDS and it was too early to gauge the damage that either Mulroney or Reagan would later do).
>
> At the beginning, Phil Authier and I (who finished off the year as editor from January) tried to rally round the challenge that we "blow the lid of the university!" in our first year of publication. After a while, it seemed apparent that the passion which once drove student/political issues previously was sliding into a decade that was notorious for self-interest, mass manipulation, pursuit-of-excellence and bottom-line bottom feeders.[61]

As an epilogue to the founding of the *Link*, such a declaration foregrounds the legacy of a

paper which often sought a strong political voice.

Then-outgoing editor-in-chief Jane Shulman presented her own view of the experience

of being there twenty years later:

> Working at the *Link*, it has always felt like we were part of something bigger than ourselves, with a richer history than we could imagine. It was never just about the journalism or the sense of community – it was usually a healthy (or unhealthy) mix of both.
>
> The *Link* epitomizes the student press model – take a bunch of eager, underfed kids who spent too much time alone in their rooms during high school and want to make a difference in the world, put them in an asbestos-filled office in a university and set them up with computers and the occasional infusion of really bad pizza and/or alcohol. It's guaranteed that by dawn, you'll have a student newspaper.[62]

According to Shulman – borrowing the language current at CUP between 1965 and 1991 –

the *Link*'s staff "have always strived to be agents of social change." She also describes

working there as "a life-altering experience," and a "fabulous experience" – which may

sound somewhat hyperbolic, but (much like the sense of being part of something larger,

adding some historical gravitas to the mix) found some echo in the thoughts offered by

many former editors (*Daily* and *Link* alike) interviewed for this project, who described it, for

instance, as "the best thing I ever did in university," "exactly what I thought university was

supposed to be about," or simply "the most fun I had in my life."

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[61] Leslie, Doug. "Forced merger ushered in '80s materialism." *The Link*, 26/9/2000: 15.
[62] Shulman, Jane. "Twenty terrific years of journalism...and then some." *The Link*, 21/9/2000: 13.

On the occasion of the 25th anniversary, the paper took up a theme summarized on its cover: "The Wonder Years: The *Link* looks back on 25 years of shit-disturbing, shutdowns, running around with Hunter S. Thompson and kickin' ass." An extensive timeline, drawn up by editors Steve Faguy, Tracey Lindeman-Jarvis and Saraline Grenier, outlines the trials and tribulations of the paper, reaching back also to the days of its predecessors to note events surrounding the Sir George Williams affair (discussed in more detail later in this chapter) and early on-campus competition by a paper called, simply, *The Paper* (later the *Concordian*, though no relation to the current on-campus competition of the same name), founded in 1968; *The Paper's* first editor, Wayne Gray, "says the paper was intended as an alternative to The *Georgian*, which some students complained was leaning too far to the left."[63] The 1982 Gay issue prompted less constructive reactions, as the writers note, "including a written threat signed by the 'committee to rid fags from the universe.'" "*Link* editors," they continue, "deny the issue is meant to convert everyone to homosexuality. An estimated 5,000 copies of the paper are destroyed." On-campus rivalry again enters the equation when the timeline notes the first publication of contemporary campus-press rival the *Concordian*, alongside a quote from a then CUSA vice-president student services who stated at the time that "their facts are all wrong" – and follows up with the quip that "[t]he paper would spend at least the next two decades attempting to fix this minor flaw."

Also noted are a number of incidents of controversy: a *Link* edition pulled from the stands at student election-time as "campaign literature," (1984), an ongoing libel case involving the school's athletics director over 'pay-to-play' allegations (1984-1990), and plagiarism accusations against the *Concordian* (alleged in 1992 over a caricature, and acknowledged in 1998 over text covering a local protest), and a number of others. On a more politically-charged track, it notes the institution of the advertising boycott list in 1983

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[63] Faguy, Steve, Tracey Lindeman-Jarvis and Saraline Grenier. "The times they are a-changin'." *The Link*, 25/10/2005: A6-A7.

(and the inclusion of the Department of National Defense on that list the following year, "conforming with the [*Link's*] Military Free Zone policy") and the institution or occasional appearance of special issues (Women's in 1981, the aforementioned Gay issue in 1982, Nuclear Disarmament in 1984, what became the Women Against Violence issue, in commemoration of the Ecole Polytechnique massacre, in 1990, and the Presse universitaire du Quebec special bilingual issue, which regrouped francophone and anglophone student papers to cover the 2001 anti-FTAA demonstrations in Quebec City).[64] More contemporary, it notes the debut of the *Link*'s first website on October 16, 2001, and mentions a substantial 2000 financial fraud at the CSU in connection with a controversy which soon enveloped the paper in accusations of bias and undemocratic tendencies (this time, allegedly working against left-wing radicals). A rundown of events related to this controversy is itself the subject of four consecutive entries on the timeline, which highlight a "threat to the *Link*'s autonomy," but offer little insight into why some students were angry; the controversy is discussed in some detail in the last section of Chapter 5.

The 2005 issue is easily the most extensive and historically wide-ranging, printing cover-shots, vintage editorials and run-downs about first issues, spoof issues and notable events - including a 1967 full-cover photo depicting a crowd of students occupying the Hall Building lobby in a successful protest against high prices at the university bookstore (captioned "My, how things change"). Alongside tidbits regarding the 'community' side of the paper's history, including recollections of weekend getaways at a university-owned farmhouse near the US border and the Sunday night exploits of The *Link*'s own hockey team in the early 1980s, a whole page spread of short columns recall the technological metamorphoses of the past twenty years, which (despite, though perhaps not negating, Kucharsky and Tourneur's assessment in the 20th anniversary issue) marked a somewhat

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[64] See Chapter 6 for more on this, including discussion of the Link and Daily's coverage of this event and prior build-up associated with movement(s) against corporate globalization.

abrupt transition to a predominantly digital working environment at the beginning of the decade. The retrospective focuses primarily on a blend of institutional history, reminiscence, and humor (including a selection of offbeat staff quotes,[65] and recollections of unusual and unwelcome non-contributors who spent time in the *Link*'s offices).

Sleeping in the paper's offices – staff or otherwise – and repeated resignations (and reconciliations) aside, the politics or mission of the paper (actual or inferred) are treated obliquely. Certainly, the mention of key stories and special issues associated with social movement struggles and protest reinforces a view of the paper as a left-oriented entity, but *the overall presentation tends towards ambivalence in addressing politics outright. Indeed*, rather than insisting, as Shulman did five years earlier, that *Link* staff sought to be "agents of social change," the unsigned introductory comments describe an enigmatic (or simply slippery) problem of definition, choosing to state countervailing (and perhaps outlandish-sounding) accusations against the paper in place of any declaration; "controversy" is highlighted, as is the role of the paper in training journalists – albeit in the context of a "love-hate relationship" predicated on grueling work for minimal pay, counterbalanced only *by glory of being in print and dedication to the journalistic enterprise:*

> It's been called communist and fascist. It's been accused of racism and tight-assed political correctness. It's been hailed for its journalistic integrity and slammed as a propaganda rag. And that's all in one week.
> The *Link* has never shied away from controversy. It has been threatened with lawsuits, political retribution, firings, and even complete shutdown numerous times. But through it all, the paper has trained some of Canada's best journalists. Now, some of those journalists have returned to their former stomping grounds to relive their glory days as student reporters with ink in their veins.
> The product of the union of former student newspapers The *Loyola News* and The *Georgian*, The *Link*'s come a long way since its birth in 1980. Its history is lined with the blood, sweat and tears of hundreds of editors who relentlessly put out a newspaper week in and week out.
> Despite the love-hate relationship, though, most editors wouldn't trade their experiences at The *Link* for anything. What, with late nights, long days, exhaustion,

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[65] E.g. "My work is a spacesuit of my soul"; "It got a little bit out of hand, as you can tell by the burning church"; "I want my shit sucked somewhere through a tube. I'm not comfortable unless my shit is sucked through a tube"; "I think five fingers are too much"; "I'm not an alcoholic, I'm a journalist." *See* "We're all freakin' geniuses." *The Link*, 25/10/2005: A11.

stress and working for almost free, who could resist?
    Perhaps they should have their heads checked... but for now, read about yesterday's news, today![66]

Although it includes scattered notes (e.g. the suggestion that student reporters went to Quebec City in 2001 not just to cover, but to support demonstrations) and a number of items from the paper's past which do highlight political contention and activist history both at the paper and the university, the focus on the *Link* as journalism training, the space devoted to other aspects of the paper (humor, the social aspects reminiscent of any campus club, technological change), and the political ambivalence – almost a disavowal – apparent in the editors' introduction are striking. Although numerous factors are likely at play, one key impetus to political ambivalence for the *Link* is perhaps the confrontational relations with some activists (including a petition to dissolve the then-current editorial board), which began shortly after the publication of the previous anniversary issue in fall of 2000. As this situation is too complicated to easily summarize here, and represents a key instance of tension between more 'professional' journalistic values and activism – not to mention a major event in the history of the paper – it is discussed at some length in Chapter 5.

The 30th anniversary issue, the last to go to print in spring 2010, is a less sustained affair than the two previous – likely in no small part due to the fact that *Link* staff were heavily invested in organizing 'Between the Lines' in conjunction with CUP, a conference which brought an array of speakers and roundtables to the Hall building for the occasion. The event itself highlighted the aspect of the enterprise that assumes a potential professional trajectory, featuring professional journalists most prominently (including *Link* alumni), alongside a number of journalism professors and a small number of other speakers (notably Dru Oja Jay of *The Dominion*, an independent, reader-funded alternative magazine, and a few other independent/alternative journalists). The title of the conference, which in turn

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[66] "The Wonder Years." *The Link*, 26/10/2005: A2.

becomes fodder for an article in the 2-page anniversary feature, "alludes to the social implications of journalism. What makes news? How do you add an original angle to a story that's been told a thousand times? How do you cover a tragedy with humanity?"[67] The same article frames the conversation among conference participants, and the work of the *Link*, as tied to a central problem: "the independent voice," it suggests, "is struggling to reach you: the readers." 2009-10 editor-in-chief Terrine Friday, the article's author, suggests that: "[w]hat matters most to The *Link* is to tell the stories of what matters most: people."

The facing page traces a selection of The *Link*'s "proudest moments as a paper," which appears to be in part derived from the 2005 timeline, noting the first publications of special Women's and Queer issues (again mentioning the threats and "mass burnings" in reaction to the latter), the advent of the advertising boycott in 1983, a 1990 eviction notice (from the offices the paper still occupies), and a number of other landmarks. For the 2000-2010 period, the "proudest moments" include a Y2K spoof issue which jokingly told students they would have to retake courses due to computer failures erasing grades (prompting the administration to insist on their posting warnings about the joke on distribution stands), *success in getting a quote from Benjamin Netanyahu*[68] *on the eve of the protest preventing his planned speech at Concordia September 2002,*[69] the paper's printing of a less-than-modestly sized image of a vagina in the 2004 Sexuality special issue (under the headline "Mind-blowing cunnilingus: it's what's for dinner," prompting a torrent of reader mail[70]), and coverage of the 2006 Dawson College shootings (only blocks away from Concordia's

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[67] Friday, Terrine. "Between the lines." *The Link*, 13/4/2010: 11.

[68] Though I should note that the only citation of Netanyahu I was able to locate was gathered at a press conference with other media held at the Ritz-Carleton following the events at Concordia (he is quoted, though it is unclear whether the quote is exclusive to the Link).

[69] Additionally, as the 2005 timeline notes (and as former editor Steve Faguy recalls), the paper was scooped by an entire week by rival The *Concordian* due to the events' occurrence on a Monday, the Link's production night.

[70] To which The Link responded in typically defiant fashion, printing a smaller version of the same image immediately below letters aghast at the indiscretion (including one which specifically took issue with that image), over which was superimposed the caption "The Link would like to thank its readers for their feedback. We love feedback here. In fact, we just eat it up!"

downtown campus, and which prompts the *Link* to suggest that 'students reporting on students' is particularly appropriate). Also included is the advent of a new "tradition" as "The *Link* gets arrested for the first time" at the annual March Against Police Brutality in Montreal – more on which is featured in Chapter 6.

Rounding out the two-page spread is a selection of 'since 1980' lines,[71] appended immediately below the title and designation as "Concordia's independent newspaper" on the *Link*'s cover starting in 2004, lines which point "at something we though was pithy – or more likely, hilarious when we wrote it at midnight." According to masthead, these may be "a reflection of how insensitive and carefree The *Link* office can get," or perhaps even "show something about The *Link*'s inner psyche." A few choice examples illustrate a sometimes self-deprecating, sometimes self-righteous, and typically offbeat sense of humor, an aspect of student journalism which is recurrent in both the *Daily* and *Link*:

> spitting in corporate coffee since 1980
> popping painkillers for capitalism since 1980
> preventing graduation since 1980
> to me, food means pizza since 1980
> still drunk since 1980
> donning malfunctioning clothing since 1980
> refusing last-minute ads from the CSU since 1980
> fixing elections since 1980
> untapped coconut potential since 1980 [...][72]

The humorous or ironic twist in either of the two papers is not always restricted to the 'since 1980' lines, comics or the *Daily*'s 'Compendium' section (or to spoof issues), at times appearing also in photo captions and headline-writing. Whatever its location, it would be negligent to let the humor in the *Link* and *Daily* pass unremarked.

On the one hand, humor can allow student journalists to express themselves in caustic fashion, lampooning their subjects through a form not subject to the same strictures as other parts of the paper. As 2009-2010 *Daily* editor Stephen Davis puts it, humor allows

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[71] The Daily, for its part, has 'since 1911' lines of similar sort.
[72] "The best of 'since 1980'." *The Link*, 13/4/2010: 10.

them "to say the sort of things we wanted to say, but can't really say within the confines of a news story or an opinion piece. So it does then really let us make ballsy statements, so the humor is really biting."[73] On the other, some editors do express reservations about the deployment of humor (and many more reserve judgment on the rate of success), especially when it accompanies news; as one *Link* editor (ca. 2008) suggests: "[t]here was a big issue with editorializing too much, you know, putting a picture of the president with money symbols in his eyes and a lizard tongue licking up dollar bills."[74] Such a position was in the minority, however (though many agree that humor be limited in the context of news), with most interviewees recalling humorous flourishes as entertaining, distinctive, and as a potentially interest-catching entry point for new readers. As one *Daily* editor (ca. 2005) put it, "we made the decision in a conscious way to not take ourselves too seriously," and humor (everywhere but news) was a way to "make student journalism different from, say, the *Gazette.*"[75] Ultimately, the nature and functions of humor – a sociologically perplexing phenomenon (Davies 1984; Speier 1998), and one held to play a role in social movements largely neglected by academics (Hiller 1983) – are hard to pin down. As 2005-2006 *Link* editor Tracey Lindeman-Jarvis summarizes (laughing at the mention of humorously inflected captions),

> I think it's a lot of factors. You sit in a room for eighteen hours a day with the same people, eating shitty food, in a shitty school, in a shitty room with shitty computers, and you just kind of go crazy. And you think 'people would find this funny, let's just put in a crazy-ass caption.' It was fun, it was liberating in a sense, because in the end you would have the final say.[76]

Whatever the explanation, the response or the social function of humor, it is – as some of the excavated material from the *Link*'s anniversary issues have no doubt indicated, a recurrent element – and one which is important to how the paper seeks to recount its own

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[73] Personal interview, February 2010.
[74] Confidential source. Personal interview, January 2010.
[75] Confidential source. Telephone interview, January 2010.
[76] Personal interview, February 2010.

history (and thus to present itself as an institution to its readers). Some of the more caustic humor runs through much of the more 'serious' content cited later on.

<center>***</center>

The *McGill Daily*, by contrast to the *Link*, is not in the habit of producing anniversary issues, perhaps because the paper is old enough to stop celebrating (though one suspects that 2011 will bring some remark on the occasion of its 100th). The *Daily* did, however, produce a similar effort, building a timeline for readers and highlighting key moments in the run-up to a 2008 referendum gauging student support to ratify their fee-levy and ensure the renewal of the Memorandum of Agreement with the university administration, which governs their operation.[77] The loose timeline, which accompanies a run-down of reasons students ought to support the paper, is notable for its focus on activist issues. Other than items describing the first issue in 1911 ("a mouthpiece for McGill, it focuses on sports and campus news"), the advent of The *McGill Daily français*[78] (with an accompanying cover-shot bearing the headline *"Hausse des frais partout"*), and the paper's securing autonomy in 1980/1981, the list is filled out by noting reporting on Pentagon-associated military research at McGill in the Vietnam era, the first gay and lesbian special issue (1972), McGill's divestment from apartheid-era South Africa in the face of student protest associated with a movement in which the *Daily* was "on the front lines", and 2005 coverage of McGill students' General Assembly vote to join the 200,000-strong province-wide strike against cuts to financial aid. The accompanying overview describes the paper as "[a]n essential part of McGill history," "[c]overing everything from the Great Depression to Vietnam War protests

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[77] This type of referendum process is one that the Daily will have to undergo every 5 years from the condition first being imposed in 2008. At the behest of the administration (in light of a Board of Governor's decision), spoken for on such issues by Deputy Provost (Student Life & Learning) Morton Mendelson, all independent student associations (those not associated with an accredited association such as SSMU, a category also including the activist Quebec Public Interest Group-McGill, campus radio station CKUT, and the McGill Legal Information Clinic) must go undergo a similar referendum prior to negotiations on renewing agreements with McGill.
[78] Later, *Le Delit.*

to today's university underfunding crisis, The *Daily* is truly McGill's newspaper of record."[79]

Updating the active focus, a comment piece by two DPS board members states that:

> Besides simply reporting on the issues of the day, the *Daily* seeks to catalyze change in the McGill community and beyond. From the sexual assault centre's fight for office space to the corporatization of food services on campus, it has never shied away from holding campus authorities to account, and from alternative burlesque to gentrification, it makes a point of covering issues other media ignore.[80]

Coverage and outreach around the referendum issue more generally had the paper (and its supporters) bringing out the rolls of star alumni (Irving Layton, Jan Wong, Irwin Cotler and Leonard Cohen, whose name also graced posters defending the *Daily*'s fee-levy eight years earlier – though a 2001 editorial admits that Cohen's role "doesn't really go beyond" having once submitted a poem),[81] and searching for claims on history which emphasize continuity and valorize the role of the *Daily* – particularly as a source of progressive contention, even controversy, which is ahead of the curve. One piece written for the *Link*, and reprinted in the *Daily*, draws on alumni including *Gazette* editor-in-chief Andrew Phillips and CBC executive documentary producer (and former *Last Post* contributor) Mark Starowicz, who stated that he had "agreed and disagreed with The *Daily* over the years, just as people agreed and disagreed with the paper when I was editor. That's not the problem, that's the point."[82] Such sentiments echo comments on the role of student newspapers from alumni in the *Link*'s anniversary retrospectives. As 1967 *McGill Daily* editor John Fekete puts it in a 'letter from the editor' on the occasion of the *Link*'s 25th anniversary, student newspapers' key social role can be cast as "claiming and exercising" the "right to controversy."[83] As the paper's own self-description (in the 'about' section of its website) states, the *Daily* "has taken courageous stands over the years, such as publishing a special

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[79] "Vote Yes to save the Daily." *McGill Daily*, 10/3/2008: 14-15.
[80] Colgrove, Sarah and Erika Meere. "Vote Yes for the Daily" *McGill Daily*, 06/3/2008: 13.
[81] "Facts and Fiction Re: The Daily's Convictions." *McGill Daily*, 05/9/2001: 8.
[82] Valiante, Giuseppe. "Former editors hope students keep Daily around." *McGill Daily*, 06/3/2008: 6.
[83] Fekete, John. "Asserting our right to controversy." Letter. *The Link*. 25/10/2005: A3.

issue for International Women's Day in the late 1970s, that were ridiculed at the time but later embraced by the mainstream media."[84]

Threads of continuity are on open display in the *Link* article noted above when both Donna Balkan (early 1970s *Daily* reporter and later executive director of the Centre for Investigative Journalism, precursor to the Canadian Association of Journalists) and Drew Nelles (then-current *Daily* coordinating editor) are both able to rattle off the following poem, also featured on the 'about' section of the *Daily*'s website:

> 'Why is The *McGill Daily*?'
> Asked the pessimist sourly.
> 'Thank God," said the optimist gaily,
> 'That it isn't hourly!'"
> - A.J.M. Smith, The Blasted Pine, 1967[85]

Appeals to such continuity, and to the value of a muckraking journalistic tradition with a social conscience, similar to some of those that appear in the *Link*'s anniversary issues, also grace the pages of the *Gazette* – with which student journalists at the *Link* and *Daily* may be said to have an at-times rocky relationship, as discussed in Chapter 4 – as a number of columnists and letter-writers express solidarity with the paper and affirmation of its place in tradition.[86]

In a 500-word piece on the *Gazette*'s third page, February 29, 2008, Andy Riga (*Link* alumni, incidentally) describes a situation "that could determine whether The *McGill Daily* – one of Canada's oldest student papers – will continue to publish."[87] An accompanying run-down of the paper's "controversial history" (which, in light of its "activist stance, led some students to protest that the *Daily* did not speak for them") notes that the paper has weighed in since the 1960s on issues including "the Vietnam war, abortion, feminism, women's

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[84] http://mcgilldaily.com/About%20us
[85] ibid.
[86] Notably, a search of all content in the Gazette for the period of reference (via the ProQuest Canadian Newsstand database) reveals 21 items which reference The Daily, whereas three refer to the Link. Of the 21, six (including two letters) refer to the referendum, and five refer to a 2000 incident in which the Student Society of McGill University ousted the paper from its offices.
[87] Riga, Andy. "Writing on the wall for *McGill Daily*?" *Montreal Gazette*, 29/2/2008.

rights, separatism, Quebec politics, activities at Quebec's French-language universities, investment in apartheid-era South Africa, and gays and lesbians."[88] The same run-down notes the 1967 firing of editor Sandy Gage over a piece on Pentagon-funded research at the university, and another historic referendum (in 1986) in which the paper's editorial board was dissolved, only to regain their positions when "few others seemed interested in putting out the paper." It also lists, as those at the *Daily* are prone to do when seeking support, notable alumni, including "The *Gazette*'s own Mike Boone, Irwin Block, Linda Gyulai, Josh Freed and Mark Lepage," but omitting long-time Quebec Affairs columnist Don Macpherson, whose online bio describes him as having "attended McGill University, where he majored in *McGill Daily*."[89]

Boone chimed in, for his part, describing the paper as his "former daycare" and recounting having "learned to think and ask irreverent questions about the issues of the day," working alongside current Canada Research Chair in Ethics, Media and Communications Marc Raboy, prominent feminist and social-justice activist Judy Rebick, and Starowicz.[90] The *Daily*, he writes, was "staffed by smart men and women who wanted to change the world." Recounting battles with the student union over "freedom of the press," which was "pushed pretty hard" by staff, he recalls the paper's surviving, in his time, an obscenity controversy (over the publication of excerpts from Paul Krassner's *The Realist*) in which efforts were made to fire editorial staff. As he notes: "The paper survived – as it has subsequent, and more noble, existential crises. Until now." In concluding, immediately prior

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[88] Ferguson, Liz. "Founded in 1911, paper has controversial history." *Montreal Gazette*, 29/2/2008:
    A3.
[89] http://www2.canada.com/montrealgazette/columnists/don_macpherson.html;
This claim is similar to those of some more recent Dailyites; former news editor Sarah Colgrove, for example, describes herself as "a graduate of the McGill Daily School of Journalism" in her writer's bio in connection with a piece written for the Fall 2009 edition of Maisonneuve magazine. See:
    http://maisonneuve.org/pressroom/issue/fall-2009/
[90] Boone, Mike. "Confessions of a former ink-stained McGill wretch." *Montreal Gazette*, 14/3/2008:
    A6.

to the final lines (citing the Starowicz quote from the *Link* article reprinted in the *Daily*), he emphasizes that a 'no' majority vote would doom the paper, and suggests that:

> A *yes vote will secure a subterranean home for future generations of trust-fund anarchists and iconoclastic schmoes.* More important, it will mean McGill students recognize the voice of a 97-year old independent voice on campus.

While the characterization of *Daily* staff here leans towards projected self-deprecation, the assertion of a vital history and identification of an activist role (bolstered by references to personalities with some current standing as press, academic and political figures), and the implicit identification of the issue with "freedom of the press" not only support the paper in its campaign, but cast its past (and present) in a particular light, staunchly opposed to views such as those of letter-writer, McGill alumni, endocrinologist and right-wing blogger Roy Eappen, who encouraged students to take their chance to de-fund a paper which "was and is a leftist rag."[91] In the end, the referendum affirmed the *Daily*'s fee levy, with 82% support – though, if the university administration has its way, the exercise will be repeated every five years, prompting concerns that one poor showing (whatever the reason) may threaten a long-standing and vital publication.

<p align="center">***</p>

Pertinent to this thesis' concern with student newspapers as 'alternative media' (mediating activist messages or taking up their own political voice), and more focused than the general overviews of the papers' respective histories noted above or the appeals to continuity and solidarity in light of the *Daily*'s referendum re-affirming its fee levy (and continued existence), are occasional retrospective features examining specific events or themes which connect the papers' past instantiations with activist issues. Perhaps unsurprisingly, many of the examples – from both papers – outlined here focus on the

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[91] Eappen, Roy. "At least one McGill alumnus won't miss students' 'leftist rag'." Letter. *Montreal Gazette*, 06/3/2008: A18.

1960s,[92] far enough away to merit a trip to the archives, and roughly matched to the height

of 'subversive' activity at the papers themselves (or their predecessors). Such

retrospectives can seek to place the respective papers in context, focusing at times on

connections with social movements; the flipside of such roles – suspicion once garnered

from authorities ranging from student union presidents to national intelligence – also

surfaces on occasion, as in one 2002 *Daily* piece examining RCMP intelligence activities at

Canadian Universities. The following is quoted from an August 18, 1975 RCMP report:

> The *McGill Daily* is the main publication at this institution, but it has drasticly [sic]
> changed the flavor of this publication within the last academic term. Most of the
> hard core Maoists have graduated or left the paper. Its position may now be
> classified as being socialists with emphasis being placed on the proper treatment of
> the average Canadian citizen...Their publication is often erratic and is usually not of
> interest to the Security Service.[93]

The feature (a cover story, incidentally, with the cover graphic largely composed of

*Daily* clippings), presented an immediate connection with (more) current events by noting

the public's shock at revelations in 1997 of RCMP spying on activists protesting the APEC

summit in Vancouver – generally considered to be a formative moment for the anti-

globalization movement in Canada (Dupuis-Deri 2007b). The article is organized around the

'McGill angle' to a book by Steve Hewitt, *Spying 101* (2002), and chronicles the RCMP's

activities monitoring "communist sympathizers" and others on-campus – "essentially

anyone who dared challenge the status quo." The 1960s, the author notes, brought "new

brands of subversion to frighten the Mounties," including "Trotskyists, Maoists, Red Power,

Black Power, Quebec separatists and the New Left." Finding a '*Daily* angle' he also notes that

student papers were "an unconscious accomplice" in information-gathering, quoting

Hewitt's "bet that that the Mounties read the student newspapers more than the students,"

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[92] Including, in some instances the first half of the 1970s; which is to say that the focus is on a period
often lumped together in popular imaginations. As Palmer (2009: 23) notes: "For some, especially for
those concerned with the left, the 1960s do not begin until the mid-decade teach-ins and anti-
Vietnam War protests, and they carry through into the later 1970s, when many of the Marxist
(especially Maoist and Trotskyist) organizations that had their origins in the later 1960s imploded."
[93] Richardson-Little, Ned. "Student, Subversives & Spies." *McGill Daily*, 11/25/2002: 10.

and noting that the *Daily*'s casual description of the McGill Student Labour Club as a 'leftist' "led the RCMP to declare the club 'communist infiltrated'." Conversely, the piece also insists that the press played a pivotal role in embarrassing the service into scaling back its intrusive activities. Coming full circle, the piece closes with the contention that despite a relative absence through the 1970s and 1980s, the RCMP might be making a comeback on campus in search of those associated with protest movements (such as the anti-APEC efforts) or Muslim students falling under post-9/11 scrutiny.

Another example presenting university (and student) history channeled through that of the student newspaper is to be found in another cover story featuring examination of the legacy of McGill's 1960s activists, "Of occupations and apathy: the ongoing history of McGill student action."[94] The feature is prefaced by a cover-photo/illustration which depicts sign-toting 1960s student protesters spilling out of the Roddick Gates in front of the university, with two uniformed police observing from the bottom-right corner of a blank foreground – and opens with Maclean's magazine's 1967 declaration that McGill student were "the most committed and involved in Canada." Recounting the 10,000-strong 1969 'Operation McGill Francais' at those same gates (see Warren 2008), and recounting the same consolidation of student identity and pressure for active roles in education agenda-setting described in Chapter 1, the story seeks to build bridges to the present, asking "[a]fter three decades of inaction, are we starting to wake up?" Finding the '*Daily* angle,' it notes the pressure applied to professors resistant to student demands in the late-60s heyday "by the campus press and its readers." History professor John Hellman is quoted on the matter:

> "The *Daily* would play a huge role in all of this," Hellman recalls.
> "A little article would denounce a professor, and the next day bandits with mock machine guns threatened them in the classroom."

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[94] Delman, Jeremy. ""Of occupations and apathy: the ongoing history of McGill student action." *McGill Daily*, 02/3/2006: 11-12.

Somewhat atypically, the article also makes the point that even in the supposed heyday of 1960s student radicalism, only "about 20 percent" of students were politically involved, and far fewer fell into the 'radical' category. The implication – one also drawn from similar data by Warren (2008; 2009) – being that "the best kept secret of the decade" actually offers encouragement to contemporary student activists, even if they are in the minority. While the article makes a point of noting the complacence of many students (one student activist suggests that "the average McGill student is scared off by a protest – they don't think it's socially acceptable") and student politicians ("more intent on getting recommendation letters [...] than effecting change") the majority of whom operate, according to the author, under the assumption the "the future will muddle along whether we participate or not," the focus is on the possibility of "regaining momentum." The efforts of an apparently rejuvenated student movement (in light of Quebec-wide strikes, discussed in Chapters 4 and 5) and campus-based activist groups such as the Grassroots Association for Student Power and QPIRG inform the closing section, and the message is ultimately one of hope for the convergence of a variety of efforts on the student left ("from anti-war campaigns to ecological sustainability") to gradually expand their reach – framing the historical exercise as one which demonstrates the possibilities for post-secondary students to effect social change through collective actions and protest.

Additional examples of the papers' (and students') activist histories are recalled, for example, in a 2004 'This week in *Daily* history'[95] – not a regular feature – which uncovered a 1979 story on divestment from Apartheid South Africa, a 1984 exposé on McGill's role in research and development for thermobaric bombs (described in the piece as "inhumane and

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[95] "This week in Daily history." *McGill Daily*, 04/10, 2004: 7.

indiscriminate weapons" by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute),[96] and a 1994 story noting that the makers of the so-called 'abortion pill' were unwilling to market it in North America "to avoid the abortion controversy" (a position decried by the original writer). What is often an undertone – asserting the *Daily*'s political role in mediating, and sometimes actively contributing to, left-oriented social movements – is stated baldly (if somewhat tongue-in-cheek) in a 2002 editorial, which suggested that "whenever social progress was made at McGill, the *Daily* was a key player."[97]

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Perhaps most notable of such retrospectives in the case of The *Link* is content focusing on one of the most storied events in the history of the university (or, to be more precise, one of its institutional antecedents, Sir George Williams University). The 'Sir George Williams affair,' mentioned in the first chapter, has prompted a number of retrospective pieces in *The Link*, notably a cover story/feature marking the 40th anniversary of the events under the headline "40 years after the computer riot"[98] and another significant treatment exactly five years earlier.[99] Each included a timeline of events, a look at the intrigue surrounding the Zoology 431 course taught by Associate Professor Perry Anderson which drew accusations of racism (evidence for which included claims that West Indian black students never exceeded a 'C' grade despite higher exam grades, Anderson's tendency to refer to them as 'Mr. \_\_\_' in contrast to first-name rapport with Caucasian students, and the case of an Asian and Caucasian student submitting an identical assignment only to receive marks of 2 and 9 on 10, respectively), and a reprint of the original demands issued by a group representing

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[96] Interestingly, also the subject of a similar expose based on work by a student activist in 2007, which makes links in a "brief history of the military and McGill" to this very case, and to substantial US DoD funding at the university in the late 1960s. See:
　　　　Nelles, Drew. "McGill professor linked to US military." *McGill Daily*, 15/1/2007: 3.
[97] "The Daily Atones For Its Sins with a Bit of the Bubbly." *McGill Daily*, 05/9/2002: 8.
[98] The feature ran 17/2/2009, pp 15-18.
[99] The earlier feature appeared 17/2/2004, pp 11-13.

black students concerned. The situation, as both major retrospectives recount, escalated as student demands for a formal inquiry were met by a response deemed unsatisfactory to the complainants (and from which the only two black faculty representatives immediately resigned).

After a confrontational meeting with VP Academic (and later the founding rector of Concordia University), John O'Brien, in which he was asked to sign a written apology, charges were filed against several students, and a week later, on January 22, 1969, the hearing committee meeting in the auditorium of the Hall Building was disrupted and a group of students began an occupation of the ninth floor computer centre, demanding that: 1) the existing hearing committee be dissolved, 2) a meeting be arranged to negotiate another, 3) that such a meeting be held "without threats of reprisal", 4) that the interests of students having lost study time in connection with the affair be granted consideration, and 5) that criminal charges levied against black students be dropped. After ten days of the occupation, on February 10, an agreement was negotiated, believed to be essentially final; however, close to midnight (and following the departure of approximately 300 of 400 people), protesters learned that what they thought was a final document appeared to again be up for negotiation.

Following the erection of barricades, police intervened to evict the protesters at the behest of the Principal, prompting a violent defensive response and warnings that the computer equipment would be targeted if police persisted. Shortly following the initial intervention of police on the ninth floor, the situation gave rise to the now-iconic scene of McKay street captured in a flurry of computer punch-cards thrown from the windows, and a fire – the responsibility for which is still of undetermined origin – forced the protesters out into the waiting arms of police. 97 were subsequently charged with conspiracy to commit arson and to damage property; while many were subsequently fined, some spent time in

jail, and a number of non-citizens were subsequently deported. Anderson, for his part, was cleared by multiple investigations and taught at Concordia for three more decades.[100] The story is a major marker in Concordia's history, tied as it is to one of its founding institutions and the building that still anchors the downtown campus. It is also a marker in the history of the *Georgian*, SGW's predecessor to the *Link*.

In addition to the retrospectives noted above, the story has elsewhere given rise to features, news stories and editorials, including coverage of a CSU-sponsored talk given by SGW affair protagonist, then-McGill Student, and later President of Dominica, Rosie Douglas, only two weeks before his death in Toronto. An editorial at the time of his death suggests that he "had become a bit of a legend round the *Link* office," and notes that retrospectives on the affair had to that point been "faithfully" produced every ten years, "wondering how Douglas and his contemporaries changed Concordia for better or for worse."[101] According to the piece, those at the *Link* "wondered what it was like to occupy the Hall building, blocking the entrances with strewn furniture," and took away lessons from Douglas' affirmation that he did not regret his role in the events of 1969, but, in the words of the writer(s), "encouraged students to engage in peaceful protest, recognizing that activism disintegrates when violence takes over":

> While Douglas was involved in a riot that caused over $2million in damage to the university, it seems unfair that he took the brunt of the blame. Let's be honest here. It was easier to nail a young black revolutionary than to accept that a complex series of events – including bungling on the part of the administration – contributed to the damage. But there is no sense in assigning blame now. If we can take anything from Douglas' memory, it is his message that students can make a difference. Because despite the destruction, Douglas' actions forced students, the administration and this newspaper to take issues such as racism seriously. Because when you don't allow students to express their rage, it will boil over.

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[100] This summary draws on the following:
http://archives3.concordia.ca/timeline/histories/compriot.html
Faguy, Steve. "Timeline: Risk of Violence." *The Link*, 17/2/2004: 12.
[101] "The lessons Rosie taught us." Editorial. *The Link*, 03/10/2000: 13.

Interestingly, the events have been used to make some decidedly different connections with the present. One piece in the 2004 retrospective cites one of the signatories to the original complaint lamenting the inevitability of student protesters being stripped of rights and legitimacy as soon as protest actions turned against property, but also notes the affair's role in spurring the development of what was to become Concordia's Code of Rights and Responsibilities, and the assertions of one West Indian black student from the infamous Zoology 431 who still holds Anderson's behavior was "reprehensible" and only feasible in an environment of institutionalized racism which presented black students with a paternalism verging on mild-mannered contempt.[102] It also makes the point that some students continue to see the university as a place where discrimination occurs on the basis of race, citing a black Jamaican student's comments that racism remains widespread, if less overt, and concludes with her take on the events of 1969:

> They paved the way for changes, and opened doors for us. When people become aware of open discrimination, they should take action. And that's exactly what they did in 1969.

Another piece in the same issue set the affair side-by-side with Concordia's 'other riot,' the protest which shot the university again into the national spotlight in 2002 when Palestinian solidarity activists prompted the cancellation of a planned speech by then-former (and current, as of writing) Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The article 'Concordia then and now,'[103] along with that issue's editorial,[104] foregrounds the affair as a failure of the administration to effectively communicate with, understand, and address the concerns of students – in large part echoing the final lines of the 2000 editorial cited above by locating the cause of the events in a failure to suitably accommodate the protester's voices within the official process. The editorial, in particular, emphasizes the development

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[102] Campbell, Jeff. "Remembering the riot." *The Link*, 17/2/2004: 11.
[103] Canning, Jordan. "Concordia then and now.' *The Link*, 17/2/2004: 14.
[104] "Administration should learn after 35 years." Editorial. *The Link*, 17/2/2004: 23.

of formal procedures (e.g. the Code of Rights and Responsibilities, procedures "simply deemed inconvenient by the rector" after September 9, 2002) in light of the 1969 events, which would allow the administration to deal with events such as the 2002 Netanyahu protest (which resulted in criminal charges and disciplinary measures for several students) in ways which would be more likely to satisfy even the more politicized students, and staunch the kind of anger "that can fuel events like what happened in the winter of 1969." Yet, the editorial suggests, Concordia Rector Frederick Lowy instead "rammed through [...] without any consultation or even notice," measures which simply exacerbate the situation, including bans on public discussion of Middle-East issues and on tabling in the Hall building, and a new "disciplinary procedure for 'exceptional circumstances'." The editors suggest that "[t]he 'let the niggers burn mentality'"[105] has been replaced with a contempt for 'activists' on campus – particularly those who are Arab or Muslim," but that the "increased bureaucracy" which arose out of the earlier incident and restraint on the part of the administration (dutifully following procedure rather than improvising new ones) could avoid unnecessary conflict. The editors, however, not overly confident that administrators had learned, close with the line "Let's hope the University has its computers backed up this time."

The affair is also treated – between the traditional anniversary features, five rather than ten years apart in the 2000s – in a February 2008 piece (for Black History Month)[106] which brings in the '*Link* angle' (or in this case, the '*Georgian* angle'. In 2008, the 'angle' is provided by 1969 contributor (and later associate editor), George Galt. Noting that vol. 32, no. 29 of the paper had been put in the hands of the West Indian Students Association (and that this issue had noted the vulnerability of the 9th floor of the Hall building two), the article cites

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[105] This line is a reference to explicitly racist statements, such as this one, made by members of a large crowd outside the Hall building at the time of the SGW affair. See Martel (2006).
[106] Friday, Terrine. "How easy it is for society to unravel." *The Link*, 26/2/2008: 9.

Galt describing himself – contra any vision of left-wing unanimity at the paper in the late 1960s – as a "conservative student" with little sympathy for the protesters and a conviction that the situation was needlessly escalated by their actions (though he does suggest that the "riot" moniker is inappropriate, given the limited scope to the events and any associated violence). Other retrospectives focus more on the role of *Georgian* editor Charles Bowman's decision to hand over editorial control to black students (resulting in publication of 'The Black *Georgian*'), and the fallout that ensued. The 25th anniversary timeline[107] remarks that the content produced was "highly libelous and inflammatory," and that RCMP seized most issues of the paper. It also notes that the conflict saw "staff locked out of the office," and Bowman fired (according to the wording of the original accusation) "for financial and journalistic incompetence." The same timeline cites Bowman's replacement's claim (following on the heels of a CUP investigation which deemed accusations against him unfounded), in withdrawing from the organization, that CUP (in its 'agent of social change' heyday) encouraged "yellow journalism."

The feature marking the 40th anniversary of the affair[108] draws out this '*Link* angle' – in fact, blurring the division between the paper and its predecessor with the caption "How 1969 was nearly the end of The *Link* and nevertheless rebuilt a shattered university." Gracing its cover with a reproduction of that which appeared on the 'Black *Georgian*,' and asserting that this "one issue stands out" in the paper's history, the retrospective notes that RCMP "padlocked The *Georgian*'s office and posted an armed Mountie at the door." Bowman is quoted:

> There were people who were very upset that we gave the black students a platform, *The Georgian* was not the free press we thought it was. We were told the publication of the paper was a privilege, not a right, and for abusing that right we were closed down.

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[107] Faguy, Steve, Tracey Lindeman-Jarvis and Saraline Grenier. "The times they are a-changin'." *The Link*, 25/10/2005.
[108] Giovanetti, Justin. "40 years of history: The Computer Riots." *The Link*, 17/2/2009: 15-18.

However, it is important to note that the feature (as is largely the case for previous treatments of the affair) is not without ambivalence, once again casting the events as an example of what can happen when student complaints are inadequately addressed; this ambivalence also extends to the role of the *Georgian*. The account of events foregrounds the paper's role, suggesting that the RCMP's efforts were to little avail "as the university's student body now knew the information," and that following a mass walk-out of the committee hearings, "students, remembering the previous day's issue of the *Georgian*, headed towards the Computer Centre." It also suggests that "the paper's reputation was severely strained by the events," that only over a month later did the paper "recover to a semblance of its former professionalism and stability," and that "[t]he newspaper would never be the same again."

In sum, it is possible to ascertain three main themes (variously emphasized or expressed) which run through the various retrospectives: 1) the events (still often cast as having 'gone too far') emerged from a failure on the part of university administrators to fairly and transparently address complaints, 2) that the student newspaper played a key role, but that the price was a loss of reputation or credibility, and 3) that, as Justin Giovanetti put it in 2009, "[a]lthough it may be attractive to ignore student's creative excess, needs and idealism, the price can be exceedingly heavy to do so."[109] All the while asserting student activism as a positive and powerful force (and asserting that it is still present, that "our old spirits of social justice and radicalism are strong,"[110]), discussion of the paper's role turns on the question of 'credibility.' While the 2004 timeline (and that for the 25th anniversary) note the tensions between CUP (which supported Bowman) and the student government at Concordia, both clearly refrain from taking sides in support of an editor who

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[109] Ibid: 17.
[110] Friday, Terrine. "How easy it is for society to unravel." *The Link*, 26/2/2008: 9.

by more 'professional' standards may have overextended himself. The 2009 retrospective elides this element of the conflict over what a student paper could legitimately do with its own pages, but nonetheless highlights a tension between activism (especially when 'activism' or protest escalates to forms of action which raise the spectre of property destruction or violence) and the kind of disinterested 'professionalism' expected by the student government, considered as a prerequisite for 'credibility.' Variants of this tension are a theme to which this thesis will frequently return in subsequent chapters.

Much more broadly, the histories of The *Link* and The *Daily* sketched out here through their own accounts (and those of former staff), as well as taking the occasional detour to familiarize the reader with what it's like to produce a student newspaper, or crack the occasional joke, generally affirm a view of the respective papers as going about their work with a strong left-wing orientation, allying themselves with past movements and activist initiatives and seeking to present a platform for groups marginalized by mainstream media and the wider society. For alumni and more recent staff alike, the papers are viewed as sites for political contention, critique and affirmation; their muckraking role and sometimes-controversial status are reveled in, even if the political mission or orientation of the paper is sometimes presented in ambivalent terms.

### Histories together, as well as apart: interventions in CUP

While the descriptions and histories thus far covered have portrayed the *Link* and *Daily* in light of their own separate institutions and excursions into writing their own history alongside those of their respective universities, before moving on, it is important to note that the two papers possess, to some extent, a shared history and identity as well. As former *Link* editor Tracey Lindeman-Jarvis recalls, "the *Link* and the *Daily* have always had a good relationship with each other, there's not really been a lot of competition in recent memory,

and it's mostly because they were like the two most left-leaning papers that are part of CUP." The two frequently voted (and at times canvassed) as a bloc at national conferences – and collaborated in the middle of the decade (though not only then) on "a lot of the more progressive policies."[111]

Indeed, both papers have had significant involvement with the organization over the period of reference, and much of their efforts have been aimed at initiatives which could only strengthen or maintain their position as part of a (sub)group which one mid-2000s *Daily* editor pegged at "only 5 or 6 radical papers," among which could be counted the *Daily*, The *Link*, the *Martlet* (University of Victoria), and *Excalibur* (York University).[112] Significant initiatives and interventions at CUP with which one or both were involved include resolutions to institutionalize Special Issues Caucuses ("examining diversity, equity and representation with regard to women's, LBGTTQ, [persons of] colour, disabilities and francophone issues"),[113] to re-institute the prior practice of an alternating speaker's list (to encourage gender parity in representation at CUP conferences),[114] to hire a staff person to research "methods of evaluating the ethics of potential local advertisers,"[115] to initiate procedure to ensure "greener" conferences,[116] to officially recognize International Media Democracy Day ("designed to increase awareness around media issues, promote grassroots media alternatives and put media reform on the political agenda at the local, national and international levels"[117]), organize inclusivity/sensitivity and anti-oppression training,[118] and institute controls on the then-recently-approved possibility of corporate partnerships

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[111] Personal interview, February 2010.
[112] Confidential source. Telephone interview, February 2010.
[113] CUP 67 Delegate Binder, January 2005: 27
[114] CUP 68 Delegate Binder, January 2006: 27-28.
[115] CUP 69 Delegate Binder, January 2007: 27.
[116] CUP 68 Delegate Binder, January 2006: 28-29.
[117] CUP 69 Delegate Binder, January 2007: 73.
[118] CUP 70 Delegate Binder, January 2008: 88.

(making a vote of the plenary session sufficient cause for CUP's withdrawal from any such partnership).[119]

Furthermore, Link staff have been particularly present in facilitating the Priorities and Planning Commission (which is responsible for examining issues which affect the organization as a whole, and considering changes to the Constitution) and the Womens' Issues Caucus; the Daily and Link, in keeping with a 'vision' of CUP as more than just and an infrastructure, at the 66th annual conference, forwarded a motion calling for "philosophical debate and organizational evolution," seeking to resolve that "the CUP Board be encouraged to devote a portion of each regular meeting to to discussing strategic and visionary planning, for example wishlists, idealistic dreams of grandeur, and cookie recipes."[120]

Such efforts – though all those motions listed were passed – can sometimes appear as an uphill battle; as Lindeman-Jarvis suggests, echoing Lemon's (2004) discussion of why the 'agent of social change' clause was pushed out by CUP members in the early 1990s: "CUP people get very paranoid about dictating what the policy says, because they feel that it will dictate how their papers are run, which is not the case because CUP doesn't run the papers, they run their own papers."[121] As more than one former editor noted, jokes were often made about the two "hippy papers." Though insisting that it was "the exception and not the rule," one former *Daily* editor (ca. 2005, referring the *Daily* specifically) recalls that

> the Gateway in Edmonton really thought we were a bunch of clowns. There was an email which went out over the listserv at CUP that basically said that we were a blight on the face of respectable Canadian journalism. Those weren't the exact words, but they were pretty close.

Prominently, and perhaps most pertinently to the themes treated in this thesis, both the *Link* and the *Daily* played key roles in ensuring that language supportive of student journalists' potential political role was fore-grounded in the new preamble to CUP's

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[119] CUP 71 Delegate Binder, January 2009: 87.
[120] CUP 67 Delegate Binder, January 2005: 27.
[121] Personal interview, February 2010.

Statement of Principles,[122] and that there would be a venue for politically-minded student papers (in the 'radical congress') in future; both initiatives came to pass at CUP's 2005 national conference, with notable contributions from the *Daily*'s Daniel Cohen and the *Link*'s Anna Sarkissian. The latter, according to Lindeman-Jarvis, had a talent for conveying the value of the message that student journalism should be a force for positive social change, and a way of "softening it up, to make it acceptable to all people. Because, what's wrong with being an agent of social change, really? Is it terrible to want to change the world? As students, that's kind of your job, you know?"[123]

Interestingly, what might easily be cast as a likely clash over political vision is described in much less confrontational terms by those present. As a former *Daily* editor put it, "the most important thing about that [...] for me was when I realized that what I thought was an ideological question was in fact 90% a question of networking and sucking up to people."[124] Whereas in 2004 those concerned had gone into the plenary with no preparation, and their resolution to introduce language addressing the student press' role in promoting social change "was just shot down," in 2004-5 they "had an agenda from the beginning [...] being aggressively friendly with everybody and laying the groundwork ahead of the plenary."[125] Ultimately, even though the ideas remained the same, resolutions to approve the suggested wording, establish a 'radical congress,' make conferences more sustainable, and devote resources to efforts to bridge the divide between the English-dominated organization and their francophone Quebec counterparts were passed. The crux of the argument used to convince others hinged on the idea of student journalists as 'independent' rather than 'impartial,' as the same editor recounts:

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[122] Quoted in Chapter 1.
[123] Personal interview, February 2010.
[124] Confidential source. Personal interview, January 2010.
[125] Ibid.

> [a] lot of the kind of editors, the same kinds of people who in the first plenary would have felt threatened by that notion of the paper as an activist institution, we spent most of the conference talking to those editors, and most of those editors felt under threat from their student society, that they didn't have a kind of independent voice [...] So while it was important, on the one hand, for them to say 'We're not like politicians, we're not like activists, we're our own thing, and we have to be special because of that,' once you dig in a little deeper, what you basically have are a bunch of people without a very strong institutional footing who are looking for a way to differentiate themselves and to establish a purpose for their own existence. And once you relate to them on a level of struggle with the institutions that surround them, then you become allies. And the political punch of the social change idea is maybe a little bit diminished, it seems a little bit less threatening when the provision is thus reframed to cast the paper as "independent voice on campus" rather than "impartial critic of the student society."[126]

This particular success follows the failed initiative to revive the spirit of 'agent of social change' at the 2004 conference, noted by Lemon (2004) – and, in concert with other evidence presented in this section, illustrates both the fact that the *Link* and *Daily* are relatively unique in their positioning a 'radical' papers within CUP, and that they have been able (often cooperatively) to effect significant measures in the organization which reflect their own traditionally left-wing political orientations. The bond between the two papers, exemplified in their common endeavors at CUP, implies a significant commonality of purpose which persists over time. However different the two publications may at times be from one another, or however different one instantiation of the same paper may be from another, the past (including not only the *Georgian* and the *Daily*'s role in adopting the 'agent of social change' clause in 1965 and the *Link* and the *Daily*'s in fore-grounding language that recalls that ethos, but also many of the accounts outlined earlier in this chapter) provides a rich complement to the guiding documents of the *Link* and *Daily* that – however selectively or differentially interpreted – keeps their shared association with the idea of a politically committed student press apparent.

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[126] Confidential source. Telephone interview, February 2010.

# CHAPTER 4

## Distinguishing student journalism:
## media criticism in the Link and the Daily

*If Montreal's only English daily publishes this bile, I thought, maybe this Daily isn't so bad after all.*

- Drew Nelles, 'Striking back at the *Gazette*,' The *McGill Daily*, 2007

### *Introduction*

Having provided somewhat of a whirlwind tour of an introduction to the *Link* and *Daily* in Chapter 3, highlighting the respective papers' histories with particular attention to their political orientation or mission and associations with social movements, activism and protest (and attendant tensions), outlining their basic operations and purposes set out in the guiding documents, and noting their history of collaboration in forwarding a vision of a politically engaged student press at CUP, I now turn to a series of cases in which the *Link* and *Daily* address themselves directly to the operations and representations of the mainstream. In this chapter, I set out to elaborate some key concerns, orientations and ideals of student journalists at the *Link* and *McGill Daily* by attending to how content from the two papers (at times supplemented by interview subjects' responses) establish distinct positions relative to the mainstream media – above all, the Montreal *Gazette* and its parent corporation CanWest Global, but not only these. The process of generating or marking out the (normative) distinctions which they wish to highlight proceeds through both positive and negative operations, in effect setting out to articulate what is unique and/or valued (and what is disvalued) about the respective student newspapers, and what is disvalued (or valued) about other outlets (e.g. those in the mainstream media to which the *Link* and *Daily* might be seen as 'alternative'). I proceed here primarily with the latter, focusing on instances of media critique from content covering the period of reference, and using this as

a bridge to an expanded discussion based on interviews with student journalists – which appears in Chapter 5.

Here, I proceed with a critical reading of three distinct cases. The first presents a recurrent theme of interest among student journalists in the operations of Montreal's only mass-circulation English-language daily, the *Gazette*, and its corporate parent, CanWest – and more broadly, in considering and presenting critique of the mainstream media (a critique which often pits a positively-valued 'journalism' against the nefarious influence of the 'news industry'). This case indicates some of the ways in which student journalists may provisionally align themselves with both professionals and academics in a struggle that seeks to marshal support for journalism as a public good and a potentially vital practice. In particular, CanWest's imposition of national editorials in 2001, intolerance of dissent from within its publications, apparent political bias and efforts to maximize profits against the interests of professional journalistic labour are a recurrent subject of coverage and critique in the *Link* and *Daily* (though issues of journalistic labour and precarity, and critique of the 'news industry' more generally, notably extend to other media organizations as well).

The second and third cases differ from the first in that each presents specific instances in which student journalists have explicitly attacked particular coverage or actions on the part of mainstream media organizations and individual journalists (though both appeal to standards recognizable from the wider field of journalism). The second, taking up a subject to which I return in Chapter 6, presents analysis of two pieces which take issue with specific articles in which the *Gazette* covers student demonstrations against policies which shift postsecondary financial burdens onto students themselves. In both instances, student journalists deconstruct and criticize the *Gazette*'s accounts, enacting a dual operation by which they both assert the legitimacy of protest and appeal to journalistic standards to condemn the coverage (which is cast, among other objections, as overly focused on

disorderly or violent aspects of protest). The third case presents two specific instances in which the *Link* and *Daily* published editorials that draw attention to episodes in which student journalists were solicited by mainstream media organizations seeking information or comment. In both instances, the respective papers refused to comply, and the editorials outline objections to the conduct of the media organizations in question, centering on critique of 'shallow' efforts at maintaining an appearance (rather than appealing to a sincerely-held ideal) of balance or 'objectivity' and failure to address 'real issues,' therefore undermining the quality of public discourse.

In sum, these three cases illustrate some of the normative orientations concerning media and journalism to which many student journalists adhere, and highlight critiques of both poor treatment of protest events on the pages of the *Gazette* and of the ways in which mainstream media present a façade of 'objectivity' or 'balance,' and at times fail to take up contentious political issues in an honest and in-depth fashion. The relative fluidity of student journalists' positioning vis-à-vis mainstream journalism sets up later discussions of the tension between 'professional' and 'activist' orientations, and the latter two points of critique (regarding coverage of protest events and issues of 'objectivity,' 'balance' and fairness in journalism) set up, respectively, further treatments which appear in Chapters 5 and 6 – as well as representing cases which are of some interest on their own individual merits.

### Media criticism: CanWest, the Gazette, and the 'news industry'

Journalists, student or professional, are often voracious consumers of news and other media content. Student journalists in particular may look to mainstream media as a field in which to glean some idea of what (professional) media producers do – and what they (at the individual or institutional level) should not be doing. Whether or not particular individuals

tend towards a future career as professional journalists, commitment to participating in production of a newspaper like the *Link* or *Daily* indicates a kind of shared *illusio*, a common commitment to the tacit premises that invest the field of journalism with significance (Bourdieu 1998); student journalists, like professionals (and media activists), believe that what happens in the media or journalistic field is significant enough, for a variety of reasons, to invest their own time, energy and affective labour in it (rather than elsewhere, as might others who see journalism as 'saying' rather than 'doing').

Producing a newspaper, student journalists tend to gain an appreciation for, and cultivate opinions about, what makes for good (or bad) journalistic practice and product. This is even more the case for those having taken up editorial positions, which require a combination of ability, commitment, time, and positive sanctioning by the immediate group (as editors are elected by staff, accredited in a process which is often, to a large extent, socially negotiated prior to formal elections). As one interviewee suggested, those with a particular talent will tend to excel in whatever relevant context they find themselves, and editors tend to represent those relatively talented and committed individuals (and those most able to elicit the approval of other staff).[127] Immersed in organization and journalistic production (most editors cited figures around 40 hours/week working on the newspaper), the interest in journalistic exploits and their implications already suggested by having sought out the opportunity in the first place is inevitably reinforced, at the same time that the challenges of practice and the quest for quality and distinction prompt perpetual re-evaluation of best practices, forcing student journalists to consider the personal and social implications of journalistic work, and to express their position (all the more confidently in light of their own experience) vis-à-vis mainstream media.

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[127] Confidential source. Personal interview, April 2010.

Criticism of the CanWest chain, and its Montreal flagship the *Gazette*, represents somewhat of a staple in content inclined towards media criticism. The reasons for this are largely self-apparent. In the case of the *Gazette*, local proximity means that student journalists (and audiences) are likely to read the paper, and that coverage may overlap in significant instances; additionally, the *Gazette* often reports on issues of concern to students in general, and in which people at the papers have an interest (e.g. coverage of the student movement). In the case of CanWest more generally, the conglomerate's position of relative dominance in mainstream English-language print, television and online news – and well-justified status as emblematic of concerns about ownership concentration and convergence – makes it a prime target of interest, as does its status as a major employer of journalists and other media workers. As Shade (2005: 108-109) suggests,

> CanWest exemplifies both the dangers of media concentration, wherein a few powerful corporations control the majority of the media fare the public receives, and of media convergence, which calls for content-sharing across distinct media owned by one company operating in the same community. Media concentration and convergence, rather than expanding the media fare the public receives, restrict the access available to diverse voices.

Although many Canadians appear to agree that concentration is a serious issue,[128] the Aspers (now separated from their media assets following bankruptcy protection proceedings[129]) tended not to take such concerns too seriously. Leonard Asper, for example, once suggested (in a submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage) that "Canadian media are more fragmented and less concentrated than ever before...I submit that people who believe otherwise are not looking at the facts and they also probably believe that Elvis is still alive" (cited in Shade 2005: 113). A year after these remarks, CanWest held approximately 29% of daily newspaper circulation in Canada

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[128] In one poll, just under 75% 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed with the statement "Freedom of expression in media is a cornerstone of Canadian democracy. However, a small number of companies owning too large a part of Canada's newspapers, radio and television stations, has undermined freedom of expression in the Canadian media" (Shade 2005: 112).

[129] http://www.cbc.ca/money/story/2010/01/08/canwest-bankruptcy-online-newspaper.html

in addition to the Global Television network (Skinner and Gasher 2005); in Montreal, this translates into control over one of three English-language over-the-air television stations, and the only major local English-language newspaper (the *Gazette*).

Not only is the general issue of ownership concentration (and the specific policy direction at times taken by the CanWest conglomerate) a legitimate concern in its own right (i.e. from a public perspective rather than that of self-interested future media workers), but it is also one which is already acknowledged in the CUP Statement of Principles, which states that the organization "recognizes the potential dangers of the concentration of corporate media ownership," and therefore also "recognizes its responsibility to work towards and promote an atmosphere of media diversity."[130] As noted in the last chapter, this sentiment is echoed in the *Link* Publication Society Mandate, and the *Daily*'s own Statement of Principles – and the value of independent (or 'alternative') media, a key component of media diversity as against ownership concentration in the field of commercial news media, is repeatedly emphasized in the papers' own respective histories (and often accentuated in relation to social movements and political contention in student journalists' retellings of such histories).

Some important aspects of media criticism in the two papers appear to bear a dual relationship to student journalists' investment in an *illusio* valuing the state of media ecology in general (i.e. the need for good journalism/media products to foster critical and democratic public culture) and their 'liminal' position vis-à-vis the journalistic field (e.g. Atton and Hamilton 2008). On one hand, concern with the specific actions and organization of major media players such as CanWest speaks to the importance of such relatively dominant mainstream conglomerates and their component media outlets in articulating a sense of community for wider publics; on the other, it may speak at times to student

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[130] Canadian University Press Statement of Principles, section (a), part (v).

journalists' own interests as journalists themselves, identifying with media workers and often aspiring to professional opportunities. Such opportunities, of course, potentially entail a future inside (or as contract labour or freelancers catering to) the very organizations that are often a target of critique. On occasion, staff and editors may even have direct experience with these outlets, as interns or freelance contributors – particularly with the *Gazette*. Indeed, 2009-2010 *Link* editor-in-chief Terrine Friday explicitly marks the distinction between the student paper and the *Gazette* with reference to such experience, describing the student newspaper as "the one place where you have the most amount of freedom when it comes to the press. Especially as somebody who's done internships outside of the school – the print internships – coming back, it really makes me appreciate what you can do with the student press."[131]

One news piece from October 16, 2008, to provide an opening example, highlights a concern for the labour conditions of professional journalists (or media workers) in its presentation of CanWest efforts to recruit Concordia journalism students as freelancers in sight of a potential strike at the *Gazette* which arose amid worker protest about plans to outsource jobs. Connecting the immediate events of the story (which appeared in the *Daily*) with a figure from the theoretical portion of this thesis, Dr. Mike Gasher is reported to have sent Concordia journalism students an email suggesting that acceptance would invite their being, in the words of the writer, "perceived as scabs and ostracized by fellow journalists."[132] The unambiguous headline "CanWest recruits scabs to plug *Gazette*" and the presentation of a relatively weak rejoinder by a CanWest spokesperson insisting that the Ottawa-based newswire service was seeking freelancers "in anticipation of a greater need for news coming out of Canada's second-largest city" clearly stake out a position – onside with *Gazette* staff – on an issue which seriously affects the potential for quality content

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[131] Personal interview, April 2010.
[132] Lalisse, Mattias. "CanWest recruits scabs to plug Gazette." *McGill Daily*, 16/10/2008: 5.

production. As media scholars suggest (e.g. Hackett and Zhao 1998: 66; Hackett and Gruneau 2000; Compton 2010), increasingly precarious conditions of labour dovetail with time pressures and other constraints on journalistic practice to decrease the quality of product (by impacting the practice of professionals); in Bourdieusian terms, we might say that such developments facilitate polarization of actors in the field around the heteronomous pole. Thus, outsourcing and other moves which weaken the already poorly-institutionalized and somewhat tenuous position of journalists as a professional group moves journalistic production towards practices which are increasingly suffused with outside influence (particularly in terms of the imperatives of profit) and away from the possible prevalence of more autonomous journalistic practices.

The student journalist's position with regard to such an issue, I would argue, simultaneously arises from a genuine concern for the public good, from an identification with a journalistic 'interpretive community' (no doubt cultivated in practicing student journalism), and from a sense of solidarity with the professionals (whose ranks some student journalists no doubt expect to join), which is in turn reinforced – in this case – by a an authoritative figure in the field of academia, who is himself an experienced professional journalist. In this sense, this particular issue, as articulated in this article, captures the student journalist as a participant in much broader struggles over the fate of the journalistic field – with CanWest as a clear opponent. Indeed, as the remainder of this section indicates, struggle against the much-reviled media giant is a continuing theme in the pages of the *Link* and the *McGill Daily*; while this struggle came to a head with what became somewhat of a national crisis as the company sought to impose its will on newly-acquired operations in the first years of the decade (discussed here in some detail through the interventions of student journalists), it certainly did not disappear thereafter.

Similar issues and concerns with the conditions of journalistic labour inform a 2007 *Link* feature profiling the *Gazette*, written by Matthew Brett (a member of the *Link* board of directors at the time of writing, and a vocal advocate, on its pages, of a renewed student movement in Quebec). Again, the position of students as potential future journalists – related in ambivalent fashion to that of established professionals – is foregrounded. A 2/3 page graphic accompanying the piece juxtaposes an internal memo to *Gazette* editorial employees which offers 'enhanced severance' to voluntary departures (explicitly presented as an alternative to layoffs) with another soliciting summer interns from local journalism schools; a caption suggests that "[w]ith the paper's high-paid journalists bought out, the newsroom can hire eager reporters with at [sic] a lower salary."[133] The former document got to the *Link* via an anonymous former *Gazette* journalist, and frames discussion of a corporate approach to news that devalues the professional labour of journalists (a point on which Gasher again appears as reinforcement).[134] The piece notes mounting debts and slumping ad revenues, alongside a 14% drop in weekday readership; the solution, according to the writer: "improving the content," which would presumably attract readers. Yet, Brett writes, CanWest takes the opposite tack in "buying out journalists and filling their pages with copy-paste content" from the wire. The shift to online content-provision is also noted (a key transformative influence in contemporary news work), as is the *Gazette* strategy of 'hyperlocalism' in ensuring competitive advantage – a strategy which emphasizes those aspects of the CanWest daily's coverage that at times overlap with the reach of the *Link* and

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[133] Brett, Matthew. "How the 'West is run." The Link, 27/11/2007: 15-16.

[134] Indeed, Gasher is cited in at least 5 examples of Daily or Link stories connected with media critique over the period of reference. Such consistent appearance (to be sure, alongside a host of other prominent critics drawn from academic and/or professional circles, as well as from alternative media) in a role as critical authority merely highlights what might be cast as a variant of a point Bourdieu himself was fond of making: "Sociology," he said (and indeed the role of any critical academic, especially when called on to comment in a public forum) "is a combat sport" (Carles 2001). "Journalism" could easily make the substitution. Academics willing to take on such a public role – as Gasher has explicitly advocated – cannot simply present their analysis once for the record, but rather must make a point of being available for those presenting critical perspectives beyond the classroom.

*Daily*. In the "seismographic shift" then taking place, as the author opines, "news content, and the journalists who write it, seem to be those hit first and hardest."[135]

Also mentioned in Brett's piece is CanWest VP David Asper's outright endorsement of Stephen Harper in 2006 – with which "the elusive notion of objective media was smashed through the window" (ibid.). Of course, David's father Izzy Asper is known for firing figures such as *Ottawa Citizen* publisher Russell Mills, allegedly for strongly-put editorial criticism of former Liberal PM Jean Chrétien – a claim made, among others, by former *Gazette* Publisher Michael Goldbloom, and published in the *Daily* in 2002.[136] Indeed, content addressing the situation at CanWest and the *Gazette* was all the more prominent in the early years of the decade (at its height 2001-2002), as a series of events surrounding the consolidation of new CanWest policies (and less official pressures) impacted the *Gazette* and other outlets in the wake of CanWest's acquisition of the Southam chain previously owned by Conrad Black. The situation at that time came to a crest at the *Gazette*, where there was a strong reaction by journalists to the imposition of 'national editorials' produced for publication in all CanWest dailies, restrictions on editorial freedom, and attempts to stifle journalists' and other media workers' criticism and resistance.

Even prior to the CanWest acquisition, the Southam papers and the *Gazette* were singled out for criticism in the pages of the *Daily* and *Link*. A 2000 column by "Zachsky" (future *Gazette* employee Zach Dubinsky), for example, suggested that the lack of competition in Montreal breeds "journalistic atrophy," and recounts his telling a telephone subscription solicitor that the *Gazette* was "a poor excuse for a newspaper [...] not worth the trees it's

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[135] At the time, former Link editor and Gazette copy-editor Steve Faguy wrote (on his popular blog, 'Fagstein') that while the piece "is unsurprisingly negative in tone, it provides quite a bit of insight into the situation at the paper, as well as what the future holds for print media in general." See:
    http://blog.fagstein.com/2007/12/06/the-link-profiles-the-gazette
[136] Parry, David. "Press Freedom Fading: Former Gazette Publisher." *McGill Daily*, 28/10/2002: 5.

printed on."[137] He cites Black's "monopolistic control" and right-wing bias, to which he attributes, among other things, a drop from 4 to 0% in the proportion of labour coverage which attended Black's purchase of the *Calgary Herald* – employees of which were on strike at the time of writing, replaced by scab labour – as evidence of why readers should share his view. But while pieces such as this register a simmering discontent with *Gazette* under Black's tutelage, the aforementioned CanWest controversy, which arose after Black sold his Canadian newspaper holdings, sparked a particularly concerted reaction. One January 2002 feature sums up the situation which peaked at the Montreal paper, noting the 2-day withdrawal of bylines by 50 *Gazette* journalists the previous December and online publication of an open letter titled "Media Giant Silences Local Voices" (signed by over 70) in protest of the national editorial policy, followed by a "crackdown" which included shutting down the website on which the letter appeared and circulating a memo warning against publicly "[c]alling into question the good faith of senior management" and asserting that "[n]o one, journalist or otherwise, has the right to work at the *Gazette*."[138] Sportswriter Jack Todd, the story notes, was suspended for a critical email, and publisher Michael Goldbloom left due to the parent company's "centralized approach" – to be replaced by former Montreal Alouettes football club President Larry Smith, "a man with much business experience, but no knowledge of journalism or journalism ethics."

In addition to issues of centralized editorial control and in-house hostility towards dissent, limits on actually expressed opinion antagonized journalists and critics – and no less so the *Daily* and *Link* (and at least one journalism student bold enough to challenge Larry Smith at Concordia's journalism school[139]). As the author of the same *Daily* feature

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[137] 'Zachsky'. "A Gazette of Jacobean Proportions." *McGill Daily*, 10/4/2000: 17.
[138] Nestruck, J. Kelly. 'Global Domination." McGill Daily, 14/1/2002: 8-9.
[139] On this last point, a subsequent piece in the Link keeps the issue current ten months later, with especial relevance to Nestruck's criticism of Smith (whom the article also notes has "no previous experience with newspapers"). The piece recounts a case in which Christopher Hazou, then a first-

puts it, "three topics [...] are now essentially considered off-limits: criticism of CanWest Global's operations, criticism of Prime Minister Jean Chretien, and criticism of Israel." Among others, the case of Doug Cuthand, a Saskatoon Star-Phoenix columnist who had a piece comparing Aboriginal land-claims to the situation of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, is presented as exemplary – and the column itself is included in the same issue of the *Daily*, the first time it appeared in newsprint. Several accounts of altered copy, resignations and firings related to the three themes supplement this one, as do quotations from David Asper, referring to *Gazette* dissenters as "childish," "self-righteous," and "part of the ongoing pathetic politics of the Canadian left." Further noting opposition to the national editorial policy "across the political spectrum," the piece concludes that "[f]or now, it seems that the only opinion that's fit to print is that of Izzy Asper, his progeny, and his lackeys." The next issue of the *Daily* featured a letter from "*A Gazette Insider*," making two minor corrections to the story while calling the piece "perhaps the best overall summary of the conflict, and of the issues at stake, to have appeared anywhere."[140]

The same January 14 issue contains a letter addressed to the editors of the *Gazette*, titled "Standing up for Canadian Journalism," and a news piece presenting the opinions of j-school heads at Carleton and Ryerson, both of whom suggested that an advertising-driven

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year journalism student, confronts Smith at a talk given at the J-school, noting Gazette reporter William Marsden's explicit contention that CanWest papers "cannot run [...] op-ed pieces that criticize what Israel is doing in the Middle East," and citing data on the divide in editorial coverage between Israeli and Palestinian issues.

While the article notes Smith's rejoinder that those comments came in the midst of the crisis over national editorials, and his claims that the paper, in the writer's paraphrase, "has come very far in resolving many of the problems," and, in Smith's own words, that "journalists played a huge part in [fixing] it," the last word goes to Smith (though the writer gets credit for emphasizing a point akin to Henry Mencken's assertion that "freedom of the press is limited to those who own one"); the final lines cite Smith stating that "it is important to remember that 'he who writes the cheque has the last call,' and forcing oneself to listen to them is part of life."

Hazou, incidentally, has worked with The Link and Montreal Mirror, and as a freelancer published in the Los Angeles Times and Guardian, as well as producing pieces for activist and alternative media outlets, such as The Dominion. See:

Smith, Joanna. "CanWest monopoly debate still alive." *The Link*, 05/10/2002: .

[140] 'A Gazette Insider.' "Asper Piece Excellent: Gazoo Deep Throat." Letter. *McGill Daily*, 17/1/2002: 7.

'broadcast model' migrated from commercial television was being applied to CanWest's newspaper business. The text of the letter (the identical text of which was published by the *Gazette* on January 19, 2002 signed by *Daily* head editor Jaime Kirzner-Roberts, "on behalf of the *McGill Daily* editorial board," and appearing under the *Gazette* editors' headline "Journalism is at a crossroads,") reads as follows:

> The recent behaviour of the CanWest Global Communications Corporation toward its Canadian newspaper holdings is reprehensible. Under the guise of convergence, its 'national' editorial policy makes a mockery of freedom of the press and diversity of opinion in Canada.
>
> As Canada's future journalists, we categorically denounce CanWest's muzzling of Southam journalists, and its editorial policies that weaken regional voices. Newspapers are not private bullhorns for their owners or the corporations that run them. They are primarily responsible to their readership and their communities. If the Aspers cannot accept this, they should sell their newspaper holdings and make way for owners who can balance a thirst for profit with a desire to serve the public good.
>
> We, student journalists, many of whom will go on to work for CanWest owned papers, wish to express our support and solidarity with the writers and editors of *The Montreal Gazette* and other Southam papers, who are standing up to defend good journalism, and we condemn the 'chill' currently enforced by upper management. We urge CanWest to review its short-sighted policies and to work towards the primary function of media, informing the public, and creating a healthy, diverse public forum for civic discourse.
>
> The future of journalism in Canada lies at a crossroads. We will not sit idly by while the Aspers destroy responsible journalism in Canada.[141]

A joint protest by editorial board members from the *Daily*, *le Délit*, and the *Link* in front of the *Gazette*'s offices on Sainte Catherine eventually made it into the timeline of notable historic events in the *Link*'s 25th anniversary issue; the issue was important enough for the papers' staff to make it off of the page and into the street. Indeed, this appears to be a unique instance of the papers' staffers expressing a particular concern en bloc, by taking up a mode of action, the public demonstration, in which those involved with the papers have tended to place particular importance, often attributing such public displays, large and small (and sometimes controversial) a status and depth of treatment (and breadth of attention, covering frequent demos too small to make copy elsewhere) greater than they are attributed in many mainstream outlets.

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[141] "Standing up for Canadian Journalism." Editorial. *McGill Daily*, 14/1/2002: 6.

A week after the *Daily*'s letter, The *Link* presented an editorial putting forward a series of concrete policy points, suggesting an enforced legislative remedy for ownership concentration woes. The paper calls for action, asserting that the legal right to dictate content (in *Gazette* publisher Larry Smith's words, the fact that "he who writes the cheques has the last call") does not equate to moral right – that "newspapers aren't businesses like any other."[142] The editorial – drawing on a claimed uniqueness of Quebec English-language newspapers' social function in articulating viewpoints which can't be expected to be the same as those generated from Winnipeg – calls for intervention by government. Specifically, the editorial calls on government to 'regionalize' the existing regulations concerning foreign ownership, so that not only out-of-country, but also out-of-province ownership would be forbidden – an interesting, if not easily practicable, proposal by any account. Clearly, the case which arose around CanWest's national editorial policy (which was discontinued amid what quickly became a national controversy), alongside other concerns related here, served as a rallying point. However, it is my contention that the coverage of this issue in the *Link* and *Daily* expresses a larger dynamic of struggle, arising from student journalists' particular position, and that this case is more of an apex-point than an exception.

Looking at the period of reference as a whole, one might go so far as to suggest that those involved with these two papers have a recurrent role as media activists, arguably part of a larger (though sometimes dispersed) movement for what Carroll and Hackett (2006) refer to as 'media democracy.' As noted, the critical interventions in media matters that appear in the two papers often focus on (media) labour issues and questions of journalistic autonomy – but in doing so, they seek to highlight issues of broader public concern. And their focus, while sharpened by the particular concerns raised in the case of CanWest, is by no means restricted to it. Indeed, the *Daily*, for example, has elsewhere covered labour

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[142] "Laws needed against media concentration." Editorial. *The Link*, 22/1/2002: 11.

issues at CBC at the time of a 2005 lockout at the Corporation – focusing on CBC demands to increase contract work, and presenting comment from CBC journalist and picketer (outside a panel session at McGill where then-CBC head and McGill Board of Governors' Chair Robert Rabinovitch was in attendance) James Cudmore. Cudmore, prominently quoted in the page three news piece, insists that reporters ought to be permanent employees, justifying his argument with appeals to quality: "There's no motivation for you to work on that hard-hitting story [on contract]...and you don't actually get to do the big [stories]."[143] Over the past decade, both the *Link* and *Daily* appear to have made a concerted effort to return to issues concerning media labour issues,[144] autonomy, ownership, political bias, and quality when potential stories arise (though the question of what proportion of their audience is equally concerned remains unanswered).

Before moving on to other aspects of media criticism appearing in the papers, I wish first to emphasize the deployment of two sources of critical authority on media issues in their coverage. One intermittent (but clearly recurrent) feature of coverage concerning media issues across the period of reference in both papers is the presentation of panels and speakers concerned with such issues related to socio-political effects, organization, and conditions of production (from both a public and producer's perspective). Media ownership concentration and convergence (and attendant concerns for diversity or bias), jibes about the journalists' role as 'mad dogs' or 'lap dogs' (Carroll and Hackett 2006: 22; see Chapter 2), labour concerns (as noted above) and various prognostications about the future of the

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[143] Churchill, Liam. "CBC lockout spills onto McGill Campus." *McGill Daily*, 15/9/2005: 3.

[144] To provide just one more example, earlier that same year, the Daily presented a story again targeting CanWest for compelling freelancers to renounce copyright, citing an official CUP condemnation of contract terms reserving exclusive right "in perpetuity" for CanWest. CUP joined the Canadian Association of Journalists in this condemnation of the contract, and the organization officially resolved to "urge all student journalists not to sign it," with CUP president Chris Dinn suggesting that it was "particularly damaging to [...] young journalists," and that organization viewed itself explicitly as having a role to play in combating media convergence in Canada. See:

Crighton, Claire. "CUP condemns new CanWest policy for restricting freelance writers' rights." *McGill Daily*, 27/1/2005: 5.

news industry all appear on the pages of the *Link* and *Daily*, in contrast to the relative paucity of coverage related to such issues in much of the mainstream press (with, perhaps, the exception of some coverage of CanWest's follies in competing outlets in the 2001-2002 period). Indeed, the particular interests and concerns of student journalists likely make conferences and presentations addressing such issues especially attractive, and therefore well-represented in content – though such representation is of course easily justified given the public importance of such issues.

The point to be emphasized here, however, is the importance of academic and professional journalistic voices as resources (invested with their own reserve of symbolic capital) for critical news and comment in opposition to any impassive acceptance of the de facto right of media corporations and their owners to do as they please with their assets, or, for that matter, some journalists' insistence that they alone (or some amorphous, ostensible and abstract 'public' for whom they might take the liberty of speaking) are the best placed to decide and define the contours and best practices of journalism. While the argument, for professionals, is not without a degree of instrumental self-interest (as may be implicit for student journalists looking towards professional careers), the larger issue at stake is that, as a field of cultural production which mediates others (including the powerful influences of the political and economic fields), journalism – as the accounts presented here emphasize – must be somehow accountable beyond the regulation of the market.

To provide one more example which amply highlights (in fact, renders explicit) this dynamic, we may look to *Link* coverage (subsequently reprinted in the *Daily*, vouching for its perceived importance)[145] of a talk sponsored by the Federation of Professional

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[145] While not a rare practice, it is notable when particular types of story appear in either the Link or the Daily, as running copy from the CUP wire appears to be a disvalued practice. Producing quality, original copy is mentioned by several interviewees as a distinct marker vis-à-vis other CUP papers (e.g. "we don't just run a lot of CUP wire copy like some other papers"; or, recounting a decision on whether to publish a piece editors felt could be deemed sexist, "a CUP story is better than this piece

Journalists of Quebec[146] and to another *Daily* piece in which former *Gazette* publisher Michael Goldbloom explicitly called on university-based academics to monitor, and critically engage in public, over media issues such as those raised by the consolidation and implementation of CanWest policy in the early years of the decade.[147] The former, focused on the national editorial policy, makes explicit the contention that journalism is not simply business (decribing ownership concentration as a "growing crisis" in its lead), and prominent journalists and academics (including Gasher) are cited noting that the uniqueness of resistance at the *Gazette* can be associated with other papers' non-unionized staff, and holding that, in Gasher's words, CanWest is "in the business of spreading information, but it's doing the exact opposite"; a lone dissenter on the panel, holding that the market (i.e. sales to readers) is a sufficient arbiter of quality, is cited – but the citation is immediately followed by a refutation, closing the piece. The latter piece, published in October 2002, presents Goldbloom enjoining academics to work towards acting as a check on journalists' corporate employers, asserting a moral imperative which trumps owners right to do as they wish, and stating that "University scholars must engage in the same critical examination of the media as political scientists do of Canadian politics."

The coverage of such an explicit message in a student newspaper appears emblematic of what much of the content so far described in this chapter does: it marks out axes of struggle which run through the mainstream journalistic field, pitting journalists and editors against corporate employers on issues which appear to threaten public access to high-quality

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of shit!"). Indeed, a high ratio of staff-written relative to wire copy (as discussed in a 1976 survey conducted by Bogart) is noted in Shapiro's (2010: 147) overview of quality criteria in journalism as a marker, in the minds of many professional editors, of "editorial quality" for a given publication. The fact that (without having conducted a formal quantitative analysis) it appears that the two papers are more likely to reprint one another's copy (or CUP Quebec Bureau Chief copy, often produced by individuals associated with The Link or Daily), I would suggest, emphasizes both a local focus (which is unsurprising) and a reciprocal relationship between the two publications.

[146] Biberstein, Rene. "Journalists gather to discuss CanWest Crisis." *The Link*, 12/2/2002: 3.
[147] Parry, David. "Press Freedom Fading: Former Gazette Publisher." *McGill Daily*, 28/10/2002: 5.

journalistic products (which must consider local community interests and particular conditions, be products of journalistic autonomy from owners and other interests, and are more likely to be produced under conditions in which experienced, full-time professionals are retained), and engaging – in some instances – academics, as outside authorities, as well. In the context of such a struggle, the particular intersection of roles and identifications for committed student journalists come into focus. While many media employ 'experts' of various stripes in all manner of content, the deployment of academics as 'outside experts' and coverage of conferences and similar events which feature both academics and prominent professional journalists imply, at least in the case of the CanWest saga recounted here, a dual alliance between student journalists, academics, and professional media workers which is exemplary of Gasher's (2005) analytic distinction between, and call for a defense of, 'journalism' vs. 'news industry' (and which affirms his citation of Campbell to the effect that journalism shares with academia "ideals of producing information, criticism and understanding"). That is to say, student journalists clearly fall – in the cases recounted here – onside with professionals, critical academics, and others (arguably constituents of a nascent movement for 'media democracy'), in opposition to the professionals' corporate masters, and critical of ownership convergence, increased precarity for media workers, and heavy-handed editorial policies (or perceived instances of the behind-the-scenes propagation of particular political biases, as in the case of complaints on Israel-Palestine issues).

Indeed, in the case of CanWest criticism, it seems that some student journalists identified clearly as future professionals, a position explicitly stated, for example, in the *Daily*'s letter to the *Gazette*. As former *Daily* editor Philip Todd put it in an interview, the paper took "a big interest in the concentration of corporate media nationally; we definitely offered a critical voice on that, but that's kinds of self-interested journalists following that

story."[148] Thus, some student journalists acted in a kind of contingent alliance with current professionals beset by CanWest's policies. It is surely notable that the *Daily*'s letter was published by the editors of the *Gazette* (whose discretion decides such matters), that "A *Gazette* Insider" took the time to read, praise, and correct a major feature on the affair, and that the papers took the rare step of symbolically projecting their disapproval by demonstrating physically in front of the *Gazette* offices. It is similarly notable that the two papers appeared both particularly willing to cover events (such as speakers' panels, or even a j-school speech which turned confrontational) which highlight the issue and were often organized explicitly (as in the case of the panels covered) to draw public attention to journalist's concerns, and to use their own editorial voice to take a stand. In looking at the interventions made by the two papers over the larger issue (e.g. over the entire decade), we may indeed identify what appear to be two of the key components of distinct collective actions frames throughout (Gamson 1995; Gamson and Wolfsfeld 1993): identifying an injustice (in this case a range of injustices, perhaps, but most acutely the imposition of strict, centralized editorial control and the increased precarity of journalistic work) and asserting a clear identity (via a strong us/them distinction which renders ownership – and perhaps, though less explicitly, the profit imperative or capital – in opposition to both professional and student journalists, who stand alongside critical academics in the interests of the general public). Thus, in such instances, an alliance or collective identification with professional journalists appears strong.

Such an alliance, or collective identification, however, is not necessarily stable. The priorities of the two groups, of course, are not always in harmony (leaving aside for the moment the fact that many student journalists may view their work as significantly at odds with that of professionals, more fully identifying with an 'alternative' or 'activist' role, as

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[148] Telephone interview, February 2010.

discussed in chapter 5). Solidarity between student and professional journalists is beset, for example, by initiatives such as the Federation of Professional Journalists of Quebec's efforts to implement exclusive accreditation for its members in 2002[149] (which would have been a first in North America), an initiative which Presse universitaire independante du Quebec (PUIQ) president Andre Normandin (quoted in the *Daily*) described as "very dangerous in that it will limit access to only those the FPJQ wants in their club." As he put it at the time "We already have a hard enough time getting access to documents and getting respect."[150] And as the following sections demonstrate, the actual content produced by professional journalists in the mainstream may put them, as well as their employers, in the sights of student journalists' efforts at media criticism. Nonetheless, examples such as the CanWest saga clearly illustrate that the 'independent journalism' of The *Link* and *McGill Daily* is produced by people who often have investments and/or interests in mainstream media to the point at which such issues prompt not only significant coverage (frequently amplifying academics' and professional journalists' voicing of – at least partially – common concerns), but even symbolic efforts at direct intervention – as in the case the *Daily*'s letter to the *Gazette*, the *Link*'s editorial insistence on a need for policy reform, and the two papers' joint public protest in front of the *Gazette*'s offices.

### *Issues and intersections in media criticism of the mainstream*

The scope of coverage and intervention in media criticism thus far discussed has been, for the most part, quite narrowly related to what the impact of a few general – though important – industry trends and specific moves by major mainstream media organizations

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[149] This effort was unsuccessful; no press card is legally recognized in Quebec, though de facto priveleges may be granted those with FPJQ accreditation (who must demonstrate journalism as their primary occupation, and work with a Quebec news organization). See:
    http://www.fpjq.org/index.php?id=djcadre
[150] Dubinsky, Ira. "Quebec Journalists Want Exclusive Title." *McGill Daily*, 14/11/2002: 5.

(primarily CanWest) might mean for professional journalists and their publics, mainly focusing on the *Gazette*. Casting a wider net for media criticism in the pages of the *Link* and *Daily* reveals a number of other notable instances. Event-based coverage is subject to scrutiny, particularly where there is a 'student angle' to stories. Such an angle appears, for example, in the case of criticism of *Gazette* coverage of student protest events (two examples of which are examined in this section) or criticism of the *Journal de Montréal*'s 2006 coverage of McGill's 'management carnivals,'[151] where the *Daily* accused the *Journal* of sensationalism, hypocrisy, and simply being a "terrible paper" after it decried 'sexist' aspects of the carnival events...but could not refrain from filling its pages with photos of young women in various states of undress (or, indeed, from failing to make a distinction between images taken in 2005 and 2006, a key point in establishing 'newsworthiness' and the specifics of the paper's contentions of impropriety).[152]

Criticism of more general trends or dynamics in mainstream content is also recurrent – as in the cases of criticism of 'us or them' rhetoric and stereotypical media treatment of Muslims (on the part of both US and Canadian outlets) in the wake of September 11th,[153] or of coverage of Belinda Stronach's 2004 Conservative Party leadership bid which focused on her appearance and personal life rather than her politics.[154] Indeed, the examples of event-based criticism of coverage often raise more general concerns – as is especially apparent

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[151] The *Journal de Montreal* sparked controversy by publishing several photos of semi-clad young women (and men, many who appear to be drinking alcohol) taken at an annual event held by students in the Faculty of Management; while the *Journal* insisted that it was drawing attention to potentially troubling issues of sexual exploitation and binge drinking, and sought to frame the event as particularly newsworthy in light of then-recent allegations about hazing on the McGill Redmen football team, it was revealed that all but one photo published had been taken over a year prior – and administration and student union representatives accused the *Journal* of crassly presenting a 'non-story' as news to titillate readers and tarnish the school's reputation. For a student press perspective from a party less immediately concerned, see:
Tucker, Mitch. "Party pics irk McGill." *The Gazette* [University of Western Ontario], 16/2/2006.
[152] "Much ado about nothing." Editorial. *McGill Daily*, 16/2/2006: 7;
    Sawyer, Tom. "Journal de Montreal continues to be a terrible paper." *McGill Daily*, 16/2/2006: 13.
[153] Montpetit, Jonathan. "The Language of Terror." *McGill Daily*, 20/9/2001: 14;
    Weld, Kirsten. "Anti-Islamic Stereotyping in the Canadian Media." *McGill Daily*, 03/4/2003: 10-11.
[154] Weatherall, Dave. "You gotta show teeth." *The Link*, 03/2/2004: 6.

with regard to coverage of protest events, discussed both here and in Chapters 6. Such examples of explicit critique provide student journalists with a venue to comment on the state of the media and journalism in general, and to assert their own normative orientations.

Mainstream media coverage of protest events has periodically prompted immediate criticism in The *Link* and *Daily*, sometimes reminiscent of concerns about protest coverage raised by some critical academics, some examples of which are presented in Chapter 2 (e.g. Murdock 1981; Adler and Mittleman 2004; Jha 2007; Rosie and Gorringe 2009). Addressing coverage of student activists' protest actions opposing the shift of education costs onto individual students and the cutting of bursaries and other forms of financial support, the following examples are notable in drawing a sharp dividing line which distinguishes the student journalist (as student, in solidarity with student movements) from the mainstream. Again, as in the case of criticism of CanWest and other actors in the 'news industry' outlined above, a collective identity appears to be asserted: in this case, aligning the student journalists concerned with students in general (and more specifically, with demonstrators demanding concessions from government on postsecondary funding issues), in opposition to the mainstream media (or, more specifically, the *Gazette*, and the journalists and/or editors involved in the specific coverage critiqued).

The first of two examples (both from the *Daily*) presented here is a piece in which *Daily* editor Jon Bricker lambasts the *Gazette* on the occasion of their coverage of a 2000-strong Canadian Federation of Students protest in November 1999. In Bricker's view:

> What was a mobilization that put the 'civil' back in civil (but not passive) disobedience became a sight for poor eyes for the *Gazette*'s readership on Thursday, when the rag's cover photo captured a police officer taking licks from a few stupid students who chose to take their resistance to the current post-secondary funding crisis too far. The aggression was inexcusable, but so was the *Gazette*'s reporting.[155]

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[155] Bricker, John. "Misrepresenting Representation." *McGill Daily*, 08/11/1999: 5.

The offending photo depicted protesters involved in an altercation with a police officer, apparently pushing him towards the ground. As Bricker notes, even Montreal police media relations described a largely 'civil' action; the *Gazette*'s written coverage accompanying the photo, however, "describes ad nauseam students taking misguided anger out on cops and downtown traffic and pedestrians."

Bricker, by contrast, saw, as he puts it " [s]ome two thousand students marching for a good cause." In a somewhat speculative move, echoing suggestions by student leaders at the time, the piece goes on to imply that a significantly more repressive police response (striking students with batons and making numerous arrests) to an action the next day at Concordia might be attributed in part to local media's role in angering police and undermining public sympathy for the students' cause (which is typically uncharacteristically high in Quebec relative to elsewhere in Canada). The suggestion clearly imputes a major role for media coverage in buoying (or sinking) the fortunes of social movement-associated protest actions – and it also sets a clear tone of opposition, denigrating the quality of the *Gazette*'s journalism and accusing the paper outright of "sensational and misrepresentational coverage." In both the introduction and conclusion, the author takes aim at the paper's on-campus efforts at "promotion to the very demographic wronged" in this case – thus opening up contention over the question of whom exactly the *Gazette* speaks for (or to) in its coverage.

Another comment piece, appearing the better part of a decade later and written by then-coordinating editor Drew Nelles, once again targets the *Gazette* for its coverage of a student protest event. In this case, the focus is a *Gazette* spread which includes a photo accompanied by both a news piece and column by Universities correspondent (and, as it happens, former *Loyola News* staff member) Peggy Curran. Both pieces appeared at the time of the November 15th, 2007 Day of Action for free education, a major protest event organized by

student groups in connection with efforts to revive the momentum of a student movement which had successfully employed strike-and-demonstration tactics to force the restoration of $103 million in student bursaries two years earlier. Assessing the coverage in the *Gazette* the next day, Nelles is quick to point out that:

> *The Gazette*'s lead photo depicted two Dawson students carrying a sign, under a headline reading 'On strike: students to rally today.' But the sign said, 'Free? Tax Payers Have Rights Too!' According to the caption, students were participating in an anti-strike counter-picket, but *The Gazoo* doesn't give us any more details on these vanguards of the downtrodden taxpayer. For all we know, the two kids were the only ones there.[156]

From this point on, Nelles enumerates objectionable practices and claims in the same spread: "editorializing" in the news piece (described as a "quote-unquote news story") which foregrounds students' occupations of buildings as characterized by disorder and property damage but "neglects to mention the injuries inflicted on them by police," and also takes the time to inform readers about two CEGEP students, one of whom is quoted describing himself as "not really up on politics that much." The most salient point about the other, judging by Curran's selection of details in the final copy, appears to be the fact that the individual in question happens to be wearing a Harvard sweater. As Nelles summarizes with broadside satirical verve: "Finally! Proof that protesters are all uninformed idiots who secretly attend Harvard!"

The accompanying column is described as "more galling." Among other things, Nelles notes Curran's description (quoting from her column) of the red-felt square on students' coats and backpacks - a visible symbol of the student movement in Quebec (and more widely associated with movements against social-spending austerity measures which put the less financially well-off "into the red") since major mobilizations in 2005 – as "signifying their anarchist leanings," her assertion that students "run the risk of losing a semester," and characterization of the student movement as "hijacked by a bunch of thugs who wouldn't go

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[156] Nelles, Drew. "Striking back at The Gazette." *McGill Daily*, 19/11/2007: 13.

to class even if they were enrolled in a program." The first description is, Nelles suggests, "an utterly false claim" (as he asserts Curran should be aware, having covered the 2005 strike); that about "losing a semester" relies on no precedent in Quebec history, he insists, and the final statement (about the movement being "hijacked" by "thugs") amounts to "a jaw-dropping display of pettiness and ignorance." Here, addressing Curran directly, he draws on his own personal knowledge of movement participants, "a few of whom were indeed arrested during the CEGEP du Vieux Montreal occupation," to insist that they are "people with whom I sometimes disagree, but who are principled and passionate. They even, God forbid, *like going to school.* They're just fed up with a flawed education system that neglects far too many needy students."

The framing of the story mirrors, in some respects, that of the one previously discussed; the sustained critique of a spread covering student protest actions (focusing on violence and disorder as opposed to the concerns of participants) is bookended by less-than-endeared comments on the quality of the *Gazette*, asserting its failings vis-à-vis student movements' contentious claims, which are held to be legitimate. The latter piece also adds a self-deprecating layer, citing in its introduction the author's personal worries concerning "low standards" among the *Daily*'s "pack of copy-hungry, overworked subversives who double as full-time students" – worries which are apparently easily alleviated by a look at the *Gazette*'s coverage of the student movement. The spread described, in Nelles' conclusion, ends up affirming the value of the *Daily*'s upfront 'declared bias' and the need for media to "take [student movements] seriously, rather than reduce them, as another *Gazette* headline did in Friday's issue, to 'clowns and goths'."

In both of the instances of media critique targeting the *Gazette*'s coverage of the student movement described here, the writers focus on specific elements of presentation in the *Gazette*, and both cases clearly echo academic and movement-based critiques of

mainstream media presentation of protest. The 2007 piece, besides its indictment of the reiteration of tropes which dwell on protest violence and disorder (laid at the feet of the protesters, with little mention of the role of police), also points to a clumsy instance of what could be interpreted as an offshoot of the 'regime of objectivity' described by Hackett and Zhao (1998). In part – the first point raised, in fact – criticism focuses on the *Gazette*'s presentation of a decontexualized 'counter-demonstration' in a way that appears to exaggerate the significance of the counterweight when one looks at the page, relative to the situation on the ground (where it was, Nelles implies, clearer that the 'counter-demonstration' was an insignificant sideshow). On one hand, the *Gazette*'s choice to include the photo/caption looks like an effort to show two sides of a debate, or to maintain 'balance' by presenting the situation via two polarized public claims. In this case, the effect pits students against students, and those opposing underfunding against taxpayers, rather than adopting the preferred framing of movement constituents focusing on government spending priorities.

As Gitlin (1980) long ago pointed out, coverage of political contention is often wont to discern two sides in opposition, and impute a comparable extremism to each (e.g. the 'loony left' and the 'extreme right'), thus de-emphasizing what is often (as in this case) a much larger public display, and potentially serving to rob legitimacy from protesters' claims. In effect, this is a particular problem for the kind of symbolic public display that such a protest event aims at; as Charles Tilly (2009) points out, 'unity' is important to social movement actions like the student demonstrations – and as numerous studies of protest coverage (e.g. Adler and Mittelman 2004; Leung 2010)[157] have demonstrated, media accounts often privilege movement- or community-internal dissension (and the purported incoherence or

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[157] See Chapter 2 for an overview of some of these arguments and empirical cases.

pie-in-the sky utopianism of protesters' claims) vis-à-vis the claims of protesters or groups for which protesters claim to advocate.

Of course, the thinking behind the decision to include the photo/caption may be more trivial than a genuine desire to 'represent both sides' (however much that desire, or convention, may be held to distort coverage); it is quite possible that the picture was included more as a sort of oddity than anything else, intended to draw the eye and entertain the reader. Nonetheless, Nelles' point that this element of the presentation exaggerates the significance of the 'counter-picket' would appear to stand; the question which remains pertains more to whether this is done in (perhaps misguided) journalistic 'good faith,' or without much thought to anything more than including a discordant image to keep things lively. In effect, regardless of the intention, the operation is the same – emphasizing a lack of accord on the part of students and drawing legitimacy away from the larger demonstration – an operation intensified by the aside presenting the reader with protesters who are "not really up on politics".

Although several points in Nelles' response pertain to what are claimed to be straightforward misrepresentations (of the meaning of the red square and the type of individuals involved in the more militant actions of the student movement, for example), much of the contention around media representation of protest concerns a problem which pertains to political contention on a much more general plane: it is often a struggle over meanings which are difficult to establish authoritatively or factually. Certainly, in the case of the photo, the *Gazette* could respond that its inclusion without any supplementary information says nothing about the significance of the 'counter-picket' – or that even a small group is not undeserving of having their dissent registered in print. Still, Nelles' point seems to be that if it is to be included, it should at least be contextualized. The criticism offered in this instance makes a clear point about the possible misuse of conventional notions of

'fairness' as 'covering both sides' – though rather than simply asserting the greater *a priori* relevance or importance of the anti-government student strikers, the appeal here actually speaks, to some degree, to the idea that it would be *fairer* to be more explicit about the radical disparity in numbers between strike and counter-picket.

The two instances of media criticism over coverage of student demonstrations described here foreground problems with the representation of public protest actions in mainstream media, and offer a particularly biting and explicit critique of specific instances of coverage in the *Gazette*. Notably, both pertain to the student-led movements against tuition increase and cuts to financial aid and support to students – a cause in which both student journalists and the broader student population may be expected to have some immediate interest, and which The *Link* and *Daily* have tended to cover positively in the past (with particularly notable emphasis at the time of the 2005 strike and the 2007 efforts at movement revival). In effect, the respective writers are staking out a position in favour of the preferred framing of the student groups involved in the protest through a challenge of the journalistic acuity of the *Gazette*'s coverage. The authors are fighting for two things: better presentation of the student movement (whose key claims, if not every individual's actions,[158] are presented as legitimate), and better journalism. In effect, the position of the student journalist potentially makes one an authority on both – and each of the *Daily* articles examined is a strong assertion of such authority, pushing back against others who claim to know best how to manage the fields of academia and (mainstream) journalism. In Chapter 6, the two papers' presentation of protest events associated with anti-globalization and anti-police brutality movements will raise echoes of the criticism outlines here, as well

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[158] At this juncture, it is worth pointing out that the 2007 piece was significantly less inclined to condemn and distance itself from actions which might be deemed 'violent' (or destructive of property); whereas Bricker's piece roundly condemned any actions not in line with the pacifist tradition of the 'peaceful demonstration,' Nelles counters that protester actions deemed violent are overemphasized, while violent repression by police is not reported in the same terms.

as presenting a more implicit critique through story selection, sourcing, and tone, among other potentially 'alternative' aspects of coverage.

### *Exemplary cases: The Link and the Daily confront the 'mainstream' directly*

Rather than enumerate each instance of media criticism which appears over the course of the decade, here it seems more expedient to examine two exemplary cases, which each appear in editorials published by the *Link* and the *Daily*. These examples are remarkably similar in that each presents a clear affirmation of distinction by the student editors in the face of a direct request for information or comment by major mainstream news organizations. In both cases, the editors of the respective newspapers take the request as an opportunity to chastise the media organization(s) in question, publicizing an otherwise behind-the-scenes exchange. In so doing, both editorials offer an explicit critique of important aspects of mainstream media's practices of (re)presentation and project a clear impression of journalistic (or even moral) superiority on the part of the student journalists involved. And by examining the critique they forward, it is possible to further articulate both negatively and (as defined in opposition to that which is targeted for critique) positively valued aspects of journalistic practice identified.

The first of the two cases to be examined in this section pertains to an editorial written not long after the *Link* received a phone call from someone at CBC Newsworld, seeking comment on issues related to Middle-East politics at Concordia. This was a particularly hot topic in November 2002 (and one which, in connection with other factors, proved particularly vexing at The *Link*, as outlined in Chapter 5), following on the heels of a September 9th demonstration which prompted the cancellation of a speech by then-former (and again current at the time of writing) Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu which had been set to take place in the Hall Building. With the editor-in-chief unavailable to

provide comment to the CBC,[159] the opinions editor, whose position entailed the greatest engagement with Middle-East issues among editors (among other things, being responsible for copious amounts of letters from concerned students), was offered up to provide the requested comment.[160] Minutes after confirming an appointment over the phone, the CBC called back, asking if the editor in question was Jewish (as might have been deduced from her surname[161]). Seemingly, they were concerned about "any appearance of bias," and the caller from CBC told a *Link* staffer that, "unless you can guarantee she won't say anything biased, we can't put her on." The *Link*'s primary objections to this – prompting the editorial – are twofold (though more arise from further extrapolation of these two), and relayed with gusto. The editorial strongly objects to a) the assumption that ethnic identity is a 'red flag' for possible 'bias', and b) the very possibility of *anyone* commenting without 'saying anything biased' insinuated by the exchange (at root, an epistemological question that goes back to the critique of journalistic 'objectivity,' a topic further discussed in Chapter 5). Having ironically suggested that outspoken, then-prominent NDP Middle-East critic Svend Robinson would be pleased to know that his Anglo-Saxon surname passed the first hurdle in qualifying him as an 'unbiased' CBC source on such issues (thus addressing the first objection), the paper addresses the latter thus:

> Of course, such a guarantee cannot be given. How can anyone guarantee what another will say? How can anyone guarantee their own words, which they may not construe as biased, will not be biased?
> To its credit, the CBC realized its error, and some two hours later called back to offer "apologies if that came off wrong."
> Indeed. Exactly how was it supposed to come across?
> The CBC's position was that if they could have gotten their impossible guarantee, or talked to the editor in question, to ask her if she was biased or not, it would have been okay. They seemed oblivious that the fact they had to ask at all was offensive. They seemed more oblivious to the fact that they assumed that anyone

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[159] According to the piece describing the incident, the editor-in-chief (Julia Cyboran) "had no interest in going on, and had other more important editor-in-chiefly things to do."

[160] "What's in a name?" Editorial. *The Link*, 11/19/2002: 15.

[161] Although the editorial seemingly makes a point of not mentioning the editor's actual name, the opinions editor at the time was Wendy Heitmann.

with a non-ethnic identifying last name would be unbiased, and needed no guarantees for them, was even more offensive [sic].

To assume someone's politics by their last name instead of looking at their track record is offensive. To ask for a guarantee of non-bias (which, as journalists, the CBC should know is impossible to give) is offensive. To assume non-Jews and non-Arabs don't care enough about Middle-East tensions at Concordia to possibly be biased is offensive. And to call back later trying to defend ethnic profiling under the guise of "good journalistic policy" is offensive.

CBC, colour us offended.

The editorial is framed at its outset by a characterization of contemporary news industries (particularly television) as dependent on 'image,' propagated "to reassure audiences that the people bringing them the news are credible, dependable, and trustworthy." Producers' efforts to cultivate this kind of 'image,' the piece suggests, "not only touches those who are employed in the industry but also those who appear on television as sources and guests." Thus, the piece captures an essential point of contention for student journalists looking towards the mainstream media – one which reaches right back to the points raised by those experimenting with the 'declared bias' approach noted in Chapter 1. The complaint against the mainstream is seemingly more nuanced than some radical activists' views which sometimes tend towards a pure rejection of mainstream media and journalism as useful sources of information (see Atkinson 2010) – views which tend to hold simply that 'the media lies,' and that the political economy of an advertising-based funding model, combined with private ownership, inescapably leads down a path towards the reinforcement of hegemonic or dominant interests.

Rather, as exemplified here, the complaint is with the *quality* of journalism (specifically the degree of rigor with which it seeks to generate public credibility as an impartial news source, in this case argued to be predicated on exceedingly shallow appeals to 'balance'), which is a function of its execution and the goals and standards (or normative orientations) held by its executors – that is, it appeals to *journalistic* standards, asserting the place of the student editors as actors in the larger field. The object of criticism is an apparently shallow concern with the *appearance* of objectivity or balance – implying that the problem is a lack

of intellectual rigor and genuine effort to fully explore an issue. Such a conceptualization of (apparent) objectivity or balance as the absence of bias associated with potential sources of identification (in this case a name, perhaps elsewhere a visible minority status or organizational affiliation) perceived to be pertinent to the issue at hand is central to the possibility of distortive effects emerging from the 'regime(s) of objectivity' described by Hackett and Zhao (1998). Such a notion has long been a target of student journalists, activists, academics and others who decry the effects of such a mode of representation (reinforcing, as it does, stereotypical roles and caricatured debates). This particular example, however, which simultaneously allows the student editors the chance to claim a moral and professional superiority, offers a particularly trenchant and explicit example on the pages of the *Link* – even if based, ultimately, on a gaffe which otherwise would never have seen the light of day.

The second case to be examined here exhibits a similar overall dynamic, but with a distinct subject of complaint. On November 6, 2006, the *Daily* published an editorial under the headline 'Fox News: get the story right." The piece reads as a protest against American mainstream media coverage of the Iraq war as "uncritical, simplistic, and largely distracting from the important issues" and especially quick to address prominent individuals' critical comments regarding the war with "efforts at character assassination rather than investigation of the person's claims and arguments."[162] Pointing to a then-prominent "botched joke" by John Kerry (Massachusetts Senator and former Presidential candidate)[163],

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[162] "Fox News: get the story right." Editorial. *McGill Daily*, 06/11/2006: 7.
[163] In an address to college students in California, Kerry made the following quip: "You know, education -- if you make the most of it -- you study hard, you do your homework and you make an effort to be smart, you can do well. If you don't, you get stuck in Iraq." Prepared text had actually read: "I can't overstress the importance of a great education. Do you know where you end up if you don't study, if you aren't smart, if you're intellectually lazy? You end up getting us stuck in a war in Iraq. Just ask President Bush." The story, seized upon by Republicans and some media outlets, tended to ignore the intention in favour of an interpretation by which it was a dig at US troops. See:
Baker, Peter and Jim VandeHei. "Kerry offers apology to troops." *Washington Post*, 2/11/2006.

which "drowned out" substantive issues related to the war when US news outlets picked it up in force, the editorial accuses FOX News of having "explicitly turned the remark into an attack on Kerry's character," and goes on to suggest that "CNN is just as culpable for keeping the issue a top story for days." This issue is immediately relevant to the *Daily* as both FOX and CNN had just requested the paper's tape-recording of a lecture at McGill by Seymour Hersh (a prominent US journalist), in which he stated that "[t]here has never been an [American] army as violent and murderous as our army has been in Iraq." For the aforementioned reasons, and in light of FOX's having drawn on an earlier *Daily* article to generate a story about Hersh under the unflattering banner "Kerry part duh" at the time of important US mid-term elections, the *Daily* withheld the tape from both news organizations – and sought to present their reasoning for doing so to readers (who of course would have otherwise been unaware of the request).

Presumably aghast at FOX's use of the *Daily*'s own content to frame a bitterly reactionary story, the piece decries the role of such efforts in drumming up support for pro-war, pro-military political forces. Moreover, as noted, the *Daily* declares CNN complicit, even though it does not originate the story or take as harsh a line. Thus recognizing the importance not just of the specific treatment given a potential story (i.e. by criticizing the Kerry and Hersh stories generated by FOX as "character assassination"), the editors insist on a critical consideration of whether an issue or incident should be 'in the news' at all. In concluding, the editorial states that "[t]he *Daily* does not expect that all news outlets hold the same convictions as our own editors. But from those who ask our help, we demand nothing else than responsible journalism." Once again, the assertion of journalistic (and ultimately moral) superiority brings to the fore an explicit critique of the mainstream media by publicizing a stand taken by the student newspaper in the face of a request from a major news organization (or, in this case, two). In this case, too, the position taken reflects the

claimed culpability of such organizations in failing to promote a greater and more nuanced understanding of pertinent issues among their audiences. Here though, the *Daily* editors identify the two organizations with different forms of culpability; whereas FOX is presented as actively involved in "repeating their tactics of character assassination and shirking their journalistic responsibilities," CNN is more passively involved, but "just as culpable" for refusing to rise above the fray and either discredit or ignore the story in favor of more 'substantial' ones.

Although similar in that they each constitute a stern rebuke to mainstream media outlets seeking information or comment, the two cases described here (that of the *Link*'s response to the CBC, and the *Daily*'s to FOX and CNN) represent – to a significant extent – different specific concerns. The two central issues raised are 1) the sometimes remarkably shallow techniques employed to maintain a veneer (or 'image') of credibility and balance, and 2) the tendency of some media outlets to employ decontextualized statements in constructing essentially trivial stories with potentially serious political consequences, and the tendency of these stories to persist in lieu of more substantive ones even through outlets which purport (contra FOX, notwithstanding their "fair and balanced" self-description) to be generally even-handed in their news coverage. In this latter case (the *Daily* and FOX/CNN), we appear to have a fine example of the "mad dog" doubling as "lap dog" for Republican interests (Carroll and Hackett 2006: 22), offering up Kerry's misstatement as fodder for responses attacking his patriotism and compassion, and harping on perceived indecisiveness and intellectual elitism (and apparently seeking to paint Hersh with the same unsympathetic brush).

These two central issues (and their apparent intersection) inform some of the ways in which papers such as the *Link* and *McGill Daily* might seek to define themselves differently, and are taken up – alongside others raised thus far here – in the following chapter, which

draws from interviews with former editors and content from the two papers in seeking to articulate further what self-conceptions and normative ideals guide student journalists' practice. At the same time, they draw out somewhat of a paradox. In the first case, the problem appears to be focused on the difficulty of locating or managing possible bias; the claim that even the individual concerned may falsely believe that they are making unbiased statements, which appears in the *Link* editorial, speaks to an inherent difficulty in seeking to achieve, if not the kind of shallow appearance of objectivity or balance decried, then at least some measure of fairness or honest interpretation and presentation of fact. The second, however, appeals to such standards of fairness or honest interpretation and presentation of fact, along with an evaluation of significance or relevance in story selection and presentation, which plays in to the identification of 'non-stories' and allows us to separate 'character assassination' (or its passive recapitulation) from more legitimate journalistic exploits. Ultimately, the ground between the less accessible and easily located standard of fairness, marked by a strong skeptical take on journalistic objectivity in general, and the necessary judgments pertaining to what is significant, relevant, and legitimate information to convey to audiences is that on which the practical difficulties of student and other journalisms play out.

### Conclusion

This chapter illustrates some of the ways in which student journalists at the *Link* and the *Daily* have positioned themselves with respect to the operations and problems of mainstream media through cases which show how staff may provisionally align themselves with professionals and academics in battling a 'news industry' (of which CanWest proves iconic) which threatens to erode the quality – of which some are not so sure in the first place – of journalism which is available to the public through the mainstream news media

(and which threatens their own possible movement towards professional journalism), and how student journalists may employ critique which appeals to journalistic standards of quality (and which critiques shallow conventions) to alternately defend the cause of social movements with which they choose to align themselves and/or assert the poverty of performance of mainstream media which fails to adequately address important issues of political contention.

The cases discussed, and the issues they raise (no less than the particular events they reference) are varied, yet as an ensemble, they make clear the liminal position (and variable positional negotiations) of a student journalism which can stand in solidarity with professional journalists besieged by an employer with little regard for the autonomy of the press, deploy the critical resources furnished by academics to present media critique as news, scathingly criticize problematic coverage of social protest, and highlight the failings of mainstream news organizations as a way of mark out their own distinct orientations and ideals – ideals which present *alernative(s)* to the mainstream, but appeal to standards which are often shared across the wider field of journalism. The particularly sticky questions of 'objectivity,' 'balance' or 'fairness' on which this chapter leaves off are immediately taken up in the next, drawing on the ethical guidelines in the *Link* and *Daily* (as well as CUP's Code of Ethics), and on interviews with student journalists, to draw such questions out further.

# CHAPTER 5

## Fairness, professionalism and activism at The Link and The McGill Daily: Tensions in the student press

*Link: So what about objectivity in media? Does it exist?*
*HST: No, there's no such thing.*
*Link: What kind of person becomes a journalist?*
*HST: Fuck, I don't know.*

- D. Perreault, interviewing Hunter S. Thompson, The *Link*, 1985

### *Introduction: what is (good) student journalism for at the Link and the Daily?*

As indicated in Chapter 3, it is clear that the self-presentations of the history and identity of the *Link* and the *Daily* often connect with social movements and activism; the additional case of *Daily* editors' spirited defense of the legitimacy of student protests ill-treated in *Gazette* coverage, outlined in Chapter 4, further underlines how student journalists may align themselves with activism. Yet, at the same time, staff at the respective papers clearly identify as journalists, at times associating or aligning themselves with the work of professionals, and drawing on the standards and ideals propagated in a wider field of journalism. Although the distinction is somewhat schematic, one of the most essential points which arises in examining the *Link* and *Daily* through the themes I have identified (as listed in the introduction) is the variable negotiation of tensions which arise from this dual role as activists or advocates and as journalists who share at least some major commitments to standards associated with a more 'professional' orientation often predicated on notions of 'fairness,' 'balance,' or even 'objectivity.' Thus, one of the essential (if not easily resolved) tasks of this project – as taken up in this chapter – is to highlight the ways in which student journalists conceptualize, talk about, and negotiate their practice and public self-presentations with regard to such tensions.

This chapter proceeds with a critical reading (pursuing the key theme of concern for the normative journalistic orientations of student journalists) of some of the ethical guidelines which ostensibly apply to the *Link* and the *Daily*, and takes up these issues (and the positioning of student journalists vis-à-vis mainstream media more generally) through presentation and analysis of reflections gathered in interviews with former editors. This relatively general discussion, touching on both publications, is followed by more in-depth treatments of how these tensions have been negotiated (and how the orientations predominant at a given paper may be seen to shift with turnover). Immediately following the general discussion, I present the case of what one *Daily* editor describes as "cycles of politicization" at the paper, noting the more 'professional' orientation which emerged in the late 1990s and carried over into the early part of the period of reference, and the more 'activist' or politicized orientation which developed towards the middle of the decade (seeking to illustrate throughout how such predominant orientations may be justified and described, and emphasizing the fact that neither, in practice, is a clear-cut and unambiguous alternative to the other).

Finally, I discuss a significant crisis which arose at the *Link* in 2000-2001 when the paper was criticized, and subject to both a petition to dissolve the organization and a struggle for public legitimacy and for control of the paper, in light of what was perceived to be biased coverage of Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights (SPHR, an on-campus activist group) and the then-radical Concordia Student Union, as well as for editors' decision to block a student associated with SPHR from writing news articles covering the group. These latter two cases (involving tensions between 'activism' and 'professionalism' at the *Daily* and *Link*) seek to explore and extend the considerations raised in the more general discussion – making clear that, in many cases, the liminal positioning of student journalists (as engaged in neither direct social movement communications nor 'politically neutral,'

objectivist journalism) presents difficult conundrums which are by no means handled in uniform fashion by different individuals and instantiations of the two publications.[164]

### Past 'objectivity': fairness, balance, or...?

Questions of objectivity, balance or fairness are inherently difficult for journalists – and, inevitably, they are questions with which student journalists must wrestle. 'Objectivity,' as a term, is much less in vogue than it once was as a descriptor of journalistic practice or products (Hackett and Zhao 1998), though objections to coverage by audiences (as evidenced by myriad letters to the editor and non-staff comment pieces in both the *Link* and the *Daily*) still frequently appeal to 'objectivity' as a journalistic value. Nonetheless, it is one that few student journalists I spoke with would wholeheartedly defend, at least by that name. The reasons for this, however, are not necessarily uniform.

In some cases, the objection (contra the 'declared bias' approach, outlined in Chapter 1) appears simply to reflect a belief that 'objectivity' is an impossible ideal, but respondents retain the core idea of disinterestedness or impartiality as a normative ideal in its place – acknowledging limits and displacing the term itself, but still asserting that the news, at least in the context of an individual news story, should be politically neutral. In this respect, some respondents take a line familiar in many contemporary defenses of 'traditional' journalism (e.g. Solomon 2010). Others, however, take a line essentially consistent with the 'declared bias' approach familiar from the *Daily* and some other student papers in the 1960s, inflected

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[164] Of course, it is worth recalling Bromley and O'Malley's assertion (cited on page 89), referring to the enterprise broadly conceived, that "there is something about journalism which is permanently troubled and contradictory." It is also worth noting, as former Daily editor Zach Dubinsky points out in in this chapter, that mainstream journalism frequently engages in advocacy (and that the line between 'advocacy' and 'activism' is thin) – or that some voices in the mainstream explicitly disavow the ideal of a politically neutral or unbiased journalism, as I suggest starting on page 184 via a short aside calling up a recent case of alleged bias on the part of the CBC (and providing an example in which the Daily presented readers with comments CBC reporter Neil MacDonald made at a CUP conference to make the same point).

at times with more recent academic (e.g. media studies or sociological) critiques of media

representation and the social construction of knowledge through news. As one former *Daily*

editor (ca. 2005) suggests, "if you look at any media studies text, no one takes [objectivity]

seriously at all. Then, if you look at classic journalistic texts, sophisticated ones tend to say,

'objectivity, that's not possible, but fairness and impartiality' [...] the question, I think, then

becomes what that really means."[165]

In justifying journalistic practice normatively, 'objectivity' is often supplanted by

appeals to 'fairness' when referring to the selection and presentation of different facts and

opinions or particular sources, and 'accuracy' when referring to the presentation of 'facts.'

Section 5.1 of the *Daily*'s Constitution ('Ethics') exhorts staff and contributors to be "fair and

accurate in their reports"; they must not "distort or misrepresent the facts."[166] The text here

effectively mirrors that in the CUP Code of Ethics, to which both the *Daily* and *Link* refer in

their respective governing documents as guiding conduct above and beyond provisions on

journalistic ethics included therein; the CUP Code (part 'a') offers 'fairness' as an apparent

corrective or limiting influence on 'bias,' stating that:

> Journalists' perspectives are determined by their positions within society, and will
> be necessarily biased. They must therefore recognize the political implications of
> their work, and attempt to treat their subjects fairly despite their biases.[167]

Generally speaking, it appears that the 'fair' part of the 'fairness and accuracy'

terminology is quite plastic, and can perhaps accommodate both of the positions described

above as alternatives to 'objectivity' *tout court*. 'Fairness,' after all, is not defined with any

precision, and the official guiding documents of the *Link* and *Daily* offer little by way of

clarification. The CUP Code (part 'b'), however, does further suggest specific measures

relevant to news writing on contentious political issues:

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[165] Confidential source. Telephone interview, January 2010.
[166] Daily Publications Society Constitution, last ameded April 14, 2008: 2.
[167] Canadian University Press Code of Ethics, section (a), part (i).

iv. Journalists should strive to seek out all points of view that they deem relevant to the issue at hand. They should especially seek out those whose views have been neglected by the mainstream press, or in previous coverage of the issue, and those who may stand to suffer by the effects of that event or decision under consideration.
v. However, they should also give due consideration to opposing viewpoints, allowing such interests to represent themselves accurately and to best advantage in each news story.
vi. Journalists should not report unsubstantiated opinions as fact, condemn persons or groups by innuendo or hearsay, or distort meaning by over- or under-emphasis, *or by placing facts or quotations out of context, or by using headlines not warranted by the text.*[168]

Thus, a number of guidelines formally set out to inform coverage do exist; while these are not strictly-speaking part of the unique institutional context of either paper, but rather part of a document intended to apply to all CUP papers, it is useful to consider them as a means of highlighting considerations salient to tensions which exist in student journalists' normative approach. Indeed, the constitutions of both papers indicate that the CUP Code is to be observed at each, without reservation in the case of The *Link*, and "where any lacuna exists" with regard to ethics in the case of the *Daily*.

The provisions cited above specifically appear to suggest that fairness, as applied here, implies some measure of 'balance' or equilibrium among contending points of view. This latter implication – particularly if interpreted as acting *within* discrete pieces of writing – could be viewed as aligning the Code more with the 'politically neutral' than the 'declared bias' alternative to 'objectivity.' There are, however, 'loopholes' that allow the discretion of writers and editors to determine issues such as 'relevance' in the case of the exhortation to "seek out all points of view," and through the inherently subjective and elastic possibilities as to what exactly constitutes "due consideration," or "over- or under-emphasis" sufficient to constitute 'distortion.' At the same time, the specific privilege ("they should especially seek out...") accorded to "those whose views have been neglected by the mainstream press" or "those who stand to suffer by the effects of that event of decision under consideration" seems to furnish a political inflection not only against the authority of mainstream media

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[168] Ibid, part (b).

representation of an issue or event (in cases where overlap might exist in the content of mainstream and student outlets), but in favor of presenting 'voices from below' (as against authorities, experts or decision-makers). The following provision (v.) tempers this, however incompletely, by suggesting that the interest of those (apparently) who oppose the views "neglected by the mainstream press" or "who stand to suffer" should also be sought out and allowed to represent themselves "to best advantage."

Somewhat ambivalent in its overall effect, the more politically inflected aspects of the Code echo provisions of the *Daily* Statement of Principles and *Link* Publication Society Mandate (and CUP's own Statement of Direction) which express the role of the student press in presenting readers with analysis of structures of power/hierarchy and focusing on underrepresented voices as well as connecting such analyses with the role of institutions and the larger system of higher education. Those aspects more concerned with fairness expressed as a form of 'balance' or equilibrium speak to an ideal not so far removed from traditional journalistic 'objectivity,' or at least 'impartiality.' The two tendencies appear irrevocably in tension, the product of their evolution as policy and ideal – and their simultaneous observance would appear to involve an elaborate and perhaps inconsistent rhetorical dance. Of course, the degree to which the provisions of the CUP Code of Ethics actually inform individual writers or particular examples of copy directly is questionable.[169] Nonetheless, the brief examination of these provisions undertaken here is useful in that it sets the stage for an elaboration of further tensions and countervailing tendencies that affect the mission and operations of The *Link* and the *McGill Daily* and how the work of student journalism is conceived by its practitioners.

The reason that an ideal of 'fairness and accuracy' seems plastic enough to suit both the 'politically neutral' and 'declared bias' alternatives to objectivity is that it appears to offer

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[169] That is, it is unlikely that written guidelines in the CUP constitution are consulted at every turn by writers and editors.

the opportunity to append considerations outside of the microcosm of a particular news story to the reckoning that determines its content. Thus, it is possible to argue that a story which primarily presents the views of a group not represented (or perceived to be misrepresented) in coverage elsewhere, or a group disproportionately affected by a given issue or event may be 'fair' in that those voices presented have not otherwise had a chance to be (well, or 'fairly') represented, or that the voices of others who might wish to be represented on the same issue are, for example, – within the enormous constraints (e.g. space, time, resources) of a news or feature item in a student newspaper – *less urgent* or *less deserving* of representation in the judgment of the writer, perhaps in general, but most pertinently *within the context of a particular piece of writing*. 'Fairness,' if not circumscribed to apply according to particular rules that can be invoked in a limited and easily evaluated context (i.e. *simply whether a story about a protest against police brutality presents the voices of both police and protesters with equal emphasis*), becomes more of an undisguised value-judgment. This is much less true of normative orientations which appear to cast fairness as 'balance' or equilibrium between competing points of view – again, most pertinently, if these are viewed as binding upon the journalist's work within the context of a particular piece of writing.

Where the writer is expected (in every piece) to present 'both sides' of a contentious or conflictual issue (e.g. the protest against police brutality, a real example fleshed out in the following chapters) with equal emphasis, and "to best advantage," the operation casts the journalist as more of a politically neutral observer (simply 'reporting') – even if this is acknowledged only as an ideal. The questions of relative emphasis and the presentation of contending viewpoints "to best advantage" is of course almost endlessly complicated by the journalist's role in selecting pertinent details, particular sources, quotations and making decisions on form and wording when writing particular pieces, but the fundamental

proposition that individual pieces, or acts of journalism in general, ought to aspire to this is frequently rejected by student journalists at The *Link* and *McGill Daily*. The ways in which interviewees expressed their view of how such ideals and operations ought to be handled is the focus of the following sections.

### The Political Mandate of the Link and the Daily

As noted, the apparent privilege accorded to "those whose views have been neglected by the mainstream press" or "those who stand to suffer by the effects of that event of decision under consideration" in the CUP Code of Ethics resonates with the political inflection present in the guiding documents of both the *Link* and *McGill Daily* (and in CUP's own statement of direction). The *Daily*'s Statement of Principles' main political impetus lies in the following provision:

> 2.2 Within this optic,[170] the staff of The *Daily* recognizes that all events and issues are inherently political, involving relations of social and economic power. Further, we recognize that at present power is unevenly distributed, especially (but not solely) on the basis of gender, age, social class, race, sexuality, religion, disability, and cultural identity. We also recognize that keeping silent about this situation helps to perpetuate inequality. To help correct these inequities, to the best of its staff's abilities, The *Daily* should depict and analyze power relations accurately in its coverage.[171]

Further to this, the Statement indicates that the paper's "methods should be both educative and active," and seek to cover stories ignored by mainstream media (2.3), and the *Daily* "should abide by an ethic of fairness while maintaining its autonomy" (2.4).

The *Link* Publication Society Mandate similarly notes that the paper has "a focus on advocacy journalism," carrying on "a tradition of advocating for people and groups who are marginalized, oppressed, voiceless, or simply rendered invisible because of the nature of

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[170] That is, in light of 2.1:
"2.1 The fundamental goal of The McGill Daily shall be to serve as a critical and constructive forum for the exchange of ideas and information about McGill University and related communities."
[171] The Statement of Principles (as well as asserting an "ethic of fairness") further states a commitment to "assist students and other groups working for change in a critical framework"

their situation." The Mandate, once again, emphasizes "stories not usually covered by mainstream media," and notes that "[t]here has long been a commitment to sharing stories that might not otherwise be told publically." Both documents share similar basic premises (with The *Link*'s Mandate perhaps somewhat more vague on the posited bases for 'voicelessness' or marginalization, and tending to prefer the language of 'tolerance,' 'equality' and 'diversity to that of uneven social and economic power dynamics), and offer guidance consonant with an explicitly political mission to the respective publications, their staff and writers. It is however notable that among those interviewed (n=28) – former and current – *Daily* editors and staff were much more likely to explicitly invoke their Statement of Principles in discussing the 'mission' or 'guiding principles' of the paper. Indeed, as I will discuss further in the following sections, the Statement appears to be a constant point of reference. While some struggle in negotiating the political role of the respective papers (without exception described by interviewees as guided by 'left-wing' or 'advocacy' – if not necessarily, though quite frequently, 'activist' – roles) is common to both, those involved with the *Daily* were typically more explicit in framing this negotiation in terms of particular provisions from the Statement, or with reference to the Statement as emblematic of a particular tradition. Those from the *Link* almost invariably made reference to a left-political tradition, but usually without reference to the Mandate.

The political mission of the papers, or normative orientations engendered towards student journalists' work (inevitably the product of acts of interpretation which varied between individuals, and which appeared in some cases to relate also to the dynamics within particular years' editorial collectives) are interesting for their interaction with ideas of fairness, balance, and so on. As former *Daily* editor, writer and columnist Kelly Nestruck put it in an interview (appearing to refer to a conception of 'fairness' tending towards the more 'politically neutral' version), and asserting that political judgments outside the context

of a particular piece of writing could determine its content, rather than internally applied

standards of 'balance' between contending positions, parties or sources, those at the *Daily*

(ca. 2003) were "not necessarily interested in being fair or balanced; that's not what the

statement of principles was asking us to do." Rather, they were "supposed to root for the

underdog."[172] Along the same lines, Nestruck wrote in 2003 (partially in response to an

irate SSMU candidate and his supporters, who had plastered posters reading 'Slanderous

and Biased' on a number of *Daily* distribution stands) that: "[i]t amazes me that the old

trope of journalistic objectivity is still being tossed around, as if the media has ever been

anything but biased." "Newspapers," he suggests,

> started out as the organs of political parties. The emergence of the penny press at
> the turn of the century simply switched editors and publishers' allegiances from
> parties to commercial interests.
> The occasional bit of brilliant, incisive journalism does slip through this
> imperfect system. But even these pieces can't be said to be unbiased. In these most
> sophisticated articles, the bias is hidden in the style, format, layout, and structure of
> the piece.
> [...]
> What is nice about the *McGill Daily* is that it wears its politics on its sleeves. At
> the beginning of the year, it publishes the *Daily* Statement of Principles, which lays
> out all of its biases for the reading public.[173]

A biased media, he holds in the piece quoted above, it still "very useful, but it is only ethical

when there is no effort to conceal it." In various forms, such a position – clearly in the

'declared bias' camp – was taken up by a number of interviewees, and appears in numerous

instances of editorial and comment.

With regard to the two (potentially 'fair') alternatives to 'objectivity' discussed in the

previous section, it seems notable that the most recently involved editors (indeed, the three

who remained directly involved at the time of interview, including the outgoing editor-in-

chief of the *Link* and coordinating editor of the *Daily*) seem to tend towards the more

politicized 'declared bias'-type approach; though this is by no means unique among editors

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[172] Telephone interview, February 2010.
[173] Nestruck, Kelly. "Biased, a Little Slanderous, and Proud of It." *McGill Daily*, 13/3/2003: 7.

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and writers across the period of reference, the ways in which such positions are articulated are highly variable, as I seek to describe throughout this chapter. In a clear articulation of the 'declared bias' approach, 2009-2010 *Daily* coordinating editor Stephen Davis describes the mission of the paper, as set out in the Statement of Principles, as

> founded on the idea that the idea of objectivity in the mainstream media isn't really objectivity, that objectivity is impossible, namely that the objectivity that the mainstream media strives for speaks to a very select group of people who are white, middle-and-upper class educated elite. We try to move away from that [...] on top of that, we do try to politicize everything, but especially the student experience.[174]

Such an explicitly 'activist' stance leads, in some instances, to a clear disavowal of the very possibility of a politically neutral, impartial or 'objective' journalism, and an assertion that *attempts to perform the kind of disinterested stance perpetuated through mainstream* 'regimes of objectivity' are themselves a source of particular distortions. One distinct alternative is a view of a more explicitly opinionated, politically inflected or partisan press that invests political and moral-ethical commitments more or less openly in its work. As 2009-2010 *Link* editor-in-chief Terrine Friday suggests: "The point is, that if you're not going to stand up for something or someone, who will? This whole idea of objectivity is...bullshit. It is. There's no other, better word for it." In South America, she suggests, where she acknowledges that there are clear problems with *persecution* of the press,

> they have the *freest* press, and what I mean by that is their journalists are expected to have a slant and a certain stance, and they have followings, and they're respected as journalists who have opinions, as journalists who are able to think critically, and not just *somebody who is going take a story and just write it* trying to find the common ground, in the middle, the 50 per cent mark. That's just ridiculous [...] it's just unattainable.[175]

The point about the value of a politically inflected or partisan press is one at which the notions of 'mainstream' and 'alternative' media find a historic connection; as Nestruck notes (via a somewhat compressed historical account) the history of the mainstream press in the North Atlantic countries is clearly marked by the influence of mass-circulation partisan

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[174] Personal Interview, February 2010.
[175] Personal Interview, April 2010.

print journalism or *"journalisme d'opinion,"* at least to the early 20th century (Schudson 1978; Charron 1996).

Another former *Link* editor (ca. 2007), concurring with several other interviewees, similarly suggested that the press in general ought to be more politically invested, even partisan,[176] as (in her view) this is both more honest and more likely to foster interest and debate around important political issues.[177] Indeed, the basic contention among many is that representation is always inherently political, and always inflected by subjectivity. For T. Friday, an activist or advocacy-oriented sensibility provides opportunities to focus on issues that are likely to garner a response, and perhaps to have substantial effects in prompting readers to consider issues or perspectives which they might not have otherwise. Such an orientation, for her and for many other interviewees, is also associated with what it means to be a student (an identity that for some seems to imply activism almost *a priori*, perhaps drawing on the historical reserve of institutional memory at papers like The *Link* and *Daily*). "What we care about is what we think people are going to care about," she suggests, and The *Link*'s role "is to is to dig a little deeper and get stories that are going to matter a week from now, that highlight a point or an issue. As university students, we are allowed to stomp our feet a little, and stand on that soap-box and scream. And it's our social responsibility to do it...because we can, pretty much."[178]

### Mainstream echoes: on the (possible?) desirability of political neutrality

Although most student journalists interviewed do explicitly conceive of their role as somehow 'alternative' or distinct from mainstream media, it is important to note their

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[176] To be clear, in the sense of taking positions or choosing sides on contentious issues – not in the sense, necessarily, of support for particular political parties, groups or programs.
[177] Confidential source. Personal Interview, January 2010.
[178] Personal Interview, April 2010.

strongly assertive position vis-à-vis the political potential of journalism in general. Whereas the strong objections voiced by some regarding much of the mainstream's preference for a style of presentation which pretends to what is seen as an unattainable ideal (and distortive image) of equilibrium between contending voices or interests (whether we call it objectivity, balance, or anything else) at times deride its practitioners and the commercial institutions which foster it, a strong belief that journalism and journalists are capable and necessary facilitators of public awareness and dialogue remains. Those cited above call for a press that is maximally 'free,' which politicizes its subject matter, which takes informed and opinionated stands – and which is open about its political positions and its limitations. As expressed in much of the media criticism presented in the previous chapter (especially regarding the CanWest saga), student journalists often appear to present their positions as representative of 'good journalism' (values of which are, at least to some extent, shared by professionals with whom many proved willing to show clear solidarity in the face of CanWest's threatening moves), set against its antithesis in the 'news industry.' In the interests of avoiding (unnecessarily) polarized separations between 'mainstream' and 'alternative' (or independent/student) media, and in 'taking journalism seriously,' I should note that some professional journalists, too, have argued either that more upfront political inflection would benefit their work, or that pretending to unbiased or 'objective' journalistic work it simply untenable.

A brief aside on this point may prove illustrative, and provide a bridge to more effective exploration of what emerge as both apparent similarities between mainstream and student presses and sources of tension revolving around the idea of how journalistic 'professionalism' relates to political commitment, advocacy or activism. As already implied, statements by some journalistic professionals are not always far removed from the critiques of 'objectivity' and calls for a more openly politicized press made by student journalists. To

take just one recent example, in light of recurrent Conservative attacks on the political neutrality of the CBC,[179] Globe and Mail columnist Lawrence Martin (previously fired by Asper-controlled CanWest, likely in connection with his writing on former PM Jean Chretien),[180] has suggested the following – which in turn gives some insight into how 'objectivity,' or at least its public or popular face, might be provisionally conceived by some in the field of mainstream journalism:

> The subject of media bias is a complex one in Canada because of the political culture. Normally a journalist is considered neutral or objective if he or she is somewhere in the middle of the spectrum, reflecting neither the left- nor right-wing point of view.
> But in Canada, the big mushy middle is the home of the Liberal Party, which has sought to locate itself in the mainstream and has profited over time from doing so. Therein lies the conundrum. If you're a centrist, you can well be accused of having a Liberal bias.
> In other words, it's inescapable. You're biased if you're on the left, right or middle. In other words, everyone is biased; you, me, CBC, CTV; you, me and Mr. Graves and Stompin' Tom Connors and the polar bears of Frobisher Bay.[181]

Martin's apparent suggestion here that the lay definition of objectivity implies being "somewhere in the middle of the [political] spectrum" and that the federal Conservatives are thus assailing "centrists" for Liberal or left-wing bias is very much indicative of the basic operation of criticizing journalists for political bias (especially in simplistic left-right terms). Much as do those student journalists and others who advocate for a 'declared bias' approach, Martin concludes that 'bias' of some kind is inevitable, and that journalistic products (and the journalists who produce them) are always located relative to axes of political contention. The apparent implication is that journalists have no choice but to recognize this fact, and that they are likely to be subject to criticism for whatever choices

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[179] In this particular instance, centering on the case of Frank Graves, a pollster and frequent commentator on CBC public affairs programming, attacked by Conservatives for offering unsolicited public advice to the federal Liberals (in an interview with Lawrence Martin, commenting in light of the case here), suggesting that the Conservative Party of Canada is vulnerable to a 'culture wars' strategy: targeting potentially divisive socially conservative stances taken by the government and its supporters as a means of reinforcing differences between the parties and appealing to 'socially progressive' values held by many Canadians.

[180] http://www.cwa-scacanada.ca/YourMedia/modules/canwest/courage/courage.shtml

[181] Martin, Lawrence. "A land of bias from sea to shining sea." *The Globe and Mail*, 29/4/2010.

they make in presenting news or opinion. His point appears to be that it is thus equally inevitable that journalists should simply have to defend their chosen positioning as best they can. Therefore, staking out a position politically to the left of the Conservatives (perhaps, though not necessarily, in the "big mushy middle" which is "home to the Liberal Party") should not render journalists (or news organizations such as the CBC) liable to censure for having failed at an impossible 'objectivity' or 'neutrality' which can well be used as a rhetorical resource against them for political purposes. In short, Martin is more than happy to defend journalism informed by political values to the left of the Conservative Party on certain issues as 'good journalism.'

Extrapolating from this, I would suggest that journalistic presentation which takes a sympathetic view of positions associated with left-wing politics or social justice movements (e.g. questioning the social benefits of pro-business policies or decrying the arbitrary exercise of force by police against left wing political demonstrators) can be – as it certainly is under a 'declared bias' approach – perfectly defensible journalistic practice. Yet mainstream news organizations, including the CBC (almost certainly for a combination of political expediency in defending their own legitimacy and ideological allegiance to normative approaches to journalism wedded to the kinds of values pertinent to a 'regime of objectivity'), persist in seeking to deny any effective political positioning. The CBC's ombudsperson, for example, had the following to say on the question of political bias among journalists in the course of dismissing complaints against the company with regard to the Graves affair that prompted Martin's column, in some contrast to the latter's comments:

> The nature of journalism is to probe, to be skeptical, to question. If a journalist probes skeptically into a major institution of the society, he or she is often viewed as "leftist" instead of as a skeptic.[182]

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[182] Office of the Ombusdman, CBC. "Review: Complaints about comments made by Frank Graves, President of EKOS Research, about a possible strategy for the Liberal Party." Report, May 18, 2010: 6.

Such defenses give the impression that journalism and journalists pay allegiance only to apolitical maxims (valuing skepticism and a role of 'watchdog' relative to powerful institutions), downplaying the fact that some form of political orientation inevitably plays into the ways in which such skepticism is directed, into determining what issues are priorities for any given 'watchdog,' and in informing the public presentation of the fruits of journalistic labour. The contrast here highlights both the fact that some professionals – like student journalists at The *Link* and The *Daily*[183] – are skeptical, in turn, of journalistic claims to political neutrality, and that contention over this supposed ideal of neutrality is itself a political matter (notwithstanding the claims of the CBC ombudsperson or the rhetorical power that such appeals may have over those who genuinely subscribe to the kind of lay definition of 'objectivity' described by Martin).

Indeed, positions similar to Martin's, propounded by 'mainstream' journalists, have in the past seen print in the student papers examined here, for example, when the CBC's Neil Macdonald (featured in the *Daily* in 2004) denied accusations (current then as now) of a left-wing bias at the Corporation, but suggested that "I don't think a little liberal bias would be such a bad thing, given the conservative tendencies of the power and institutions we cover."[184] McDonald, as seen through the lens of the *Daily*'s coverage, articulates the 'watchdog' ideal dear to many professional and student journalists alike (and a core component of journalism's public face, legitimating it as an institution), and connects it, as do many student journalists, with an unapologetic political positioning.

Mirroring tropes affirming journalists' role in "afflicting the comfortable," as counseled by US author Finley Peter Dunne more than a century ago (also counseling to "comfort the

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[183] Interestingly enough, when asked about of journalistic inspiration, 2009-2010 Daily editor Stephen Davis cited the work Dan Baum, writing about the experience of the working at (and being fired from) the New Yorker. As he put it, those at The Daily contend that "that nothing's apolitical;" thus it was interesting to read work "about the politics of actually working at a mainstream publication, and the politics you have to deal with, and why people get fired and that sort of thing."
[184] Dubinsky, Ira. "CBC correspondent blasts media." *McGill Daily*, 29/1/2004: 3.

afflicted," though it has been argued that he was speaking partly in jest, and that the notion has been taken up in a distortion of the 'watchdog' role which privileges more of an 'attack dog' mentality (Kovach and Rosenstiel 2007: 143)), such a position is perhaps the one most frequently cited by student journalists I spoke with – that of journalists a 'watchdogs,' as monitoring and critically investigating social institutions, but not simply as apolitical 'skeptics' (though some do indeed hold closely to the ideals of the CBC ombudperson rather than those of would-be detractors). Rather, the *Link* and *Daily* are often presented as outlets that can be both skeptical and political without giving up claim to journalistic quality. In this, those taking such a position in student media and in professional journalism are once again aligned on an axis of struggle that cuts through the field of mainstream journalism as well a concerning those occupying more marginal positions.

The notion of a 'watchdog' role for the student press often arose in interviews alongside the largely complementary trope of acting as a 'voice to the voiceless,' a phrase described by one former *Daily* editor as the "one line summary"[185] of the Statement of Principles, and which arose in interviews with staff from both papers. This particular trope has a long history, traceable to 19th century British journalist Henry Mayhew, who personalized and attended to the lives and troubles of working-class and down-and-out Londoners – and is trumpeted as a high journalistic value in connection with the investigative 'watchdog' role by Kovach and Rosenstiel in *The Elements of Journalism* (2007) a recent treatise seeking to revive mainstream journalism in the name of the 'public interest.' As they suggest, in a "search for voices that went unheeded and cheats undiscovered, the earliest journalists firmly established as a core principle their responsibility to examine the unseen corners of society" (ibid: 143). The *Link*'s T. Friday makes some modification to the formula in describing the mission of the *Link* as

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[185] Confidential source. Telephone interview, February 2010.

> [...] afflicting the comfortable and comforting the afflicted, providing a platform for people who don't have their voices heard. I don't like the term 'giving a voice to the voiceless' because that implies that I am somehow more powerful and more important by pointing to somebody and saying, 'you deserve to have your voice heard,' you know? I think that 'providing a platform' makes it sound, you know, a little bit less...hierarchical, I'm not quite sure.[186]

As I've indicated here, the idea of a press corps with an overt political orientation (alongside its traditional 'watchdog' role) is not alien in the field of mainstream journalism, even if the critique of the neutrality ideal is somewhat more timid than in its expression by some student journalists. In keeping with this line of thought, it is also worth mentioning the point, which arose in one interview, that despite student journalists' emphasis on establishing distinction vis-à-vis 'mainstream' outlets in terms of political voice and orientation (and indeed, in terms of quality), the notion of taking up a 'campaign' over a particular issue (quite possibly one which finds resonance with others' activism) is common to both student and mainstream press – in spite of any possible pretensions to neutrality. As former *Daily* writer and editor (and current editor at CBC.ca) Zach Dubinsky suggests:

> there's no question, in all of journalism, that you'll find anyone who says 'we're going to merely take what is, and put that in the pages of our newspaper.' Even at a newspaper that is seen as conservative, like the Montreal *Gazette*, where I worked, there was talk in the ed board meetings I attended, people would bring up the idea, 'Let's start a campaign around this.' You'll see the Globe and Mail will do it, the CBC does it, everybody does it. They see a pressing social issue, a financial issue, a governance issue, an issue of government. We will write a whole series of articles about this issue, we will investigate it, we will not merely take what we're given. The line between outright activism and, say, advocacy, is rather thin. Journalism can certainly tread into activism very consciously, and the reason journalism can do that is that fundamental to journalism is serving the public, ideally. [...] If public service is being done, then advocacy is totally ok.[187]

Of course, any actual claim to be 'serving the public' or 'the public good' is itself contestable; indeed, all such a view appears to exclude is the legitimacy of advocacy on behalf of essentially private or minority interests. Here, the justification of advocacy journalism (as practiced by even the *Gazette*) is predicated on an appeal to 'the public' – the same 'imagined community' (Anderson 1991) or 'imaginary demos' (Nielsen 2010)

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[186] Personal Interview, April 2010.
[187] Personal interview, March 2010.

addressed by the typical voice of mainstream journalism at large. Of course, most partisan politics claims to work towards 'serving the public' in myriad ways; many social movements (so-called 'consensus movements' the most successful among them) do so as well. The notion of 'public service' (or the 'public interest') is another plastic notion (like that of 'fairness'), loosely defining the parameters of justification for journalism that tacitly eschews efforts towards an elusive (if not *a priori* impossible) political neutrality.

The question becomes one of defining both the public and its interests, a basic, if often tacit function of journalistic discourse which constructs the community of which is speaks, and the community which it addresses (Gasher 2007). As Kovach and Rosentiel, great advocates of the 'public interest' put it, the type of journalism they wish to see a revival in "requires a press independent of any interest except for that of the ultimate consumer of the news" (2007: 159). Alas, not only is this a tremendous practical challenge (ensuring maximal autonomy for journalism), but – aside from the apparent exclusion from consideration of anyone not a "consumer of the news" – the problem of determining the public interest or what constitutes 'public service,' necessarily aggregating a tremendous diversity of groups, interests and voices (and thus potentially eliding the 'voiceless,' whomever they might be), remains almost as fluid a standard as the appeal to 'fairness.'

The degree to and fashion in which student journalists take a particular line on what is in 'the public interest' for their student constituencies or stake out positions in support of marginalized voices or interests is variable, and many are quite insistent that carrying out the paper's political mission is not inconsistent with ideals of 'balance,' not necessarily within the confines of each individual piece of writing, but at least in terms of the papers' provision of a 'forum' for a variety of viewpoints. 'Campaigns' (of the type described by Dubinsky, above) concerning particular issues may well be conducted in the student press by staff who for the most part appear to subscribe to the notion of fairness as 'balance' or

equilibrium among contending viewpoints. One *Daily* editor (ca. 2005), who tended to insist – at the same time that he asserted an interest in a politically-invested role for the paper – that coverage should be 'balanced,' and should 'represent all sides,' provides an interesting example of how this might work via his description of a campaign of coverage around the issue of a possible student strike in 2005, an effort which is highly visible on the *Daily*'s pages in that period.[188]

At the time, much of the province's post-secondary student population was out of the classroom in protest of a $103 million cut in bursaries for postsecondary students – with the notable exception of English-language universities such as McGill and Concordia, a circumstance which many student activists and student journalists found unfortunate. Rather than view the political engagement of the paper as having an impact on the balance of voices represented in news coverage, this particular editor viewed it as manifest through an orchestrated campaign to maintain the issue as a focus of attention, employing elements other than the presentation of news coverage to put forward a more direct message. Though many at the paper were interested in bringing McGill students out into the streets, where students at Montreal's English-language universities have historically been rare to join their mostly Francophone colleagues, news coverage, "continued to be pretty fair-minded [...] but definitely through these other means, the columns, and the editorials and the covers, we struck a pretty encouraging stance."[189]

In this case, the ideal of 'balance' is expressed through the deliberate inclusion of 'both sides' in news coverage, and the deployment of the paper's role as a forum for student opinion. The 'campaign,' as it were, is described as being waged via means other than a deliberate slant in news coverage (as might be justified by recourse to a strong version of

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[188] Confidential source. Telephone interview, January 2010.
[189] In the same interview, the editor in question cited the use of other forms of content in addition to news and official editorials, including "op-eds and issues, and person-on-the-streets and photos, sort of big huge photos," in keeping the possibility of joining the strike a "live issue."

the 'declared bias' approach), and consisting primarily in efforts to "keep the story on the pages" and prominent for an extended period of time and to support a particular (pro-strike) position on the editorial side of the news/editorial divide (though the mention of using the covers of the paper – for example, by decorating them with images of enthusiastic pro-strike gatherings – perhaps blurs this line). Here the role of the paper, outside of its explicit editorial stance (and a few supplementary techniques which capitalize on editorial discretion in producing the paper), is described in terms which insist that it is (relatively) politically neutral, though in this case, the editor suggests that its status as a 'forum' actually translated into more published support for the campaign issue due to a proliferation of pro-strike voices which chose to take advantage of the platform.

Even student editors such as Nestruck (who, as commentary editor at the *Daily*, was responsible for opinions and letters), while not necessarily subscribing to the view that the *Daily* had an obligation to be 'fair and balanced' or 'unbiased' in producing content,[190] suggest that the fact that any student can be published taking any view on a given issue obviates the validity of concerns that the student paper might be unduly slanted in its portrayal of particular issues. Fairness, he suggests, can be seen as primarily accomplished by "letting any student who wanted to have access to our letters page."[191] For the aforementioned editor involved in the student strike campaign at the *Daily*, the role of the paper can be described as "a sort of public town hall – too bad they don't exist on campus – of the people who are interested in this issue, or the public square for those who care. Which in this case were mostly people who were pro- going on strike or doing something." Of course, as he admits, the kinds of issues around which editors are interested in building a campaign can spark debates on whether the student newspaper is taking sides. Indeed, in the case of the 2005 strike, commitments to 'ethic of fairness' aside, it seems that some

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[190] But rather to "root for the underdog."
[191] Telephone interview, February 2010.

student journalists certainly were. The same editor, when asked about the paper's role in pro-strike efforts, recalled friends at the time discussing the possible organization of an occupation of the principal's office, a protest action in connection with which the *Daily*, according to the editor, was prepared to "send three people inside; one photo editor was basically volunteering to organize the thing, so in one sense, we were very excited about it, and willing to participate and do whatever we could to help make it happen."[192]


### Cases of tension (and change): 'professionalism' vs. 'activism' at the Daily and the Link

Having outlined, to some degree, the plasticity of some ethical standards (e.g. 'fairness') and the possible constraints and problems associated with normative journalistic orientations towards standards such as 'balance' and political neutrality (if not outright 'objectivity'), and described how many student journalists outline orientations inclined towards a politicizing, even partisan or 'activist' orientation (concerned with offering a platform for voices and stories not told in the mainstream press and with analyzing and challenging power relations), I now turn to each of the respective papers in turn to describe and analyze how more 'professional' and more 'activist' orientations are reflected in the *Link* and the *Daily*, through the experiences and impressions of student journalists working at particular moments in time. The two case studies which follow pursue some tensions between more 'professional' and more 'activist' orientations, and suggest both that changes in the general orientations of a given publication may occur in reasonably short spans of time (given high turnover, as illustrated in the case of 'cycles of politicization' at the *Daily*), and that standards and ideals associated with the wider field of journalism (e.g. the 'watchdog' role and the imperative to avoid 'conflicts of interest' or surrender journalistic autonomy), as illustrated in the case of the 'crisis' at the *Link* 2000-2001, may push tensions

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[192] Confidential source. Telephone interview, January 2010.

with an 'activist' orientation (and with actual activist groups) to the point of rupture. In the course of elucidating a critical reading of these cases, drawn from interviews and the content of the respective papers, I seek to render more concrete some of the difficulties of negotiating such tension, and some of the complexities that lie behind these simple labels.

### Case 1: "Cycles of politicization" at The Daily

At the *Daily*, the beginning of the period of reference for this thesis lies in the midst of what was by most accounts a period of transition. From 1998-99 onwards, a series of editors (notably, in coordinating and news positions) engaged in a process that tends to be described, in the pages at the time as well as by those present around the turn of the millennium and after, as a move towards greater professionalism in the news section (and, elsewhere, towards greater 'irreverence'), and away from a certain kind of activism. According to 'Ed' (ca. 2000), the transition was in part a reaction to some previous editors and staff whose interpretation of the Statement of Principles was too rigidly partisan; it appears that a perceived line between acceptable advocacy and unacceptable activism was marked out. By his account, some people involved had "decided to read [the Statement of Principles] in a very tight way; at times it could be a very doctrinaire paper,"[193] one which some students jokingly referred to as "The *Daily Worker*."[194] In the words of another editor (ca. 2003), the paper had been seen as "a tool to put forward the views of those people [who produced it]."[195] Given this view of the paper's recent history, those involved in the transition sought, as 'Ed' put it, "to make [themselves] a little more relevant and a little more fun; relevant and irreverent."[196] On one hand, the transition is described as politically

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[193] Confidential source. Telephone interview, January 2010.
[194] Confidential source. Telephone Interview, February 2010.
[195] Todd, Philip. Telephone interview, February 2010.
[196] Confidential source. Telephone interview, January 2010.

expedient in relation to the goals outlined in the Statement of Principles: as 'Ed' suggests, "people have to pay attention for you to impart anything or tell them anything, or change their views on any subject [...] this is where the *Daily* had sputtered in the past." The goal was to "make the tent bigger" without alienating "affinity groups [...] like QPIRG," an on-campus social justice group for which some interviewees claimed prior instantiations of the *Daily* could sometimes act as somewhat of a mouthpiece. On the other hand, the transition can be described as a move towards more 'professional' journalistic practices, particularly with regard to news.

Nestruck, who joined the paper in the midst of this period, describes the general approach as "more professional, less activist, maybe a little more centrist [...] less QPIRG-y."[197] Zach Dubinsky (presenting his own reconstructed account, having also arrived after the process of transition had been initiated) described it as "almost a professionalization," a period in which a number of editors "started to think of themselves more as serious journalists, with the possibility of journalistic careers in their futures, and less as activists writing manifestoes in the columns of the newspaper, for better or for worse."[198] For him, the period in the early 2000s was "a ferment, where we all oriented ourselves towards summer internships [...] When you're a student journalist, its amazing how much those jobs pay, and how prestigious they seem. Only now do we realize how exploitative they really are."

Politically, the transition arose from "a sense of frustration with some of the simplification in left-wing ideology at the time, corporation equals bad, that sort of thing. It was a period where people were looking for a more sophisticated analysis of things, rather than in fitting things into the narrative and then just kind of pushing that out," according to

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[197] Nestruck, Kelly. Personal interview, February 2010.
[198] Dubinsky, Zach. Personal interview, March 2010.

2003-2004 coordinating editor Philip Todd. [199] Yet there was never any question that the

*Daily* was anything but a left-wing paper; each and every person interviewed saw it as such,

though various configurations and gradations of 'left-wing' orientation held sway at

different periods (and a reading of back issues assures that 'Hyde Parks' and other comment

pieces gave venue a range of other views from the student body at large). Interpretations of

the Statement of Principles, and normative orientations to journalistic practice more

generally, varied according to changes in personnel. However, the impression that the

paper, even in this period of 'professionalization', did not take stands on activist issues, or

did not boast staff members writing 'radical' stories should be avoided.[200]

*According to one editor (ca. 2002), it is clear that at the time they were written, the*

guidelines were "trying to be very radical, a radical mission statement."[201] And the

Statement served as a benchmark, prompting debate as to whether particular stories were

"in line with," or "in violation of" the guidelines outlined in the document. Yet circa 2002,

the *Daily* could be better described as "a paper of the center-left in a university dominated

by the politics of the centre-right."[202] Nonetheless, lest this sound as though politics were a

lesser concern at the time, the same interviewee expressed a clear view of the paper's

activity as 'alternative,' and fiercely oppositional; here the benchmarks against which the

alternative or oppositional stance is defined are, for example, against "the mainstream

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[199] Todd, Philip. Personal Interview, February 2010.

[200] For example, it should be noted that the Daily coverage of the run-up to the 2001 Summit of the Americas, much of which is cited in the Chapter 6 and which is generally sympathetic (and sometimes very informative) falls into this period. Still, it is perhaps not too impertinent to note that one 2001 editorial lists its role in giving a boost to a campaign against a proposed Cold Beverage Agreement (CBA) to grant Coca-Cola on-campus exclusivity as the 'activist' cause most notable for the period, last in a list including anti-apartheid divestment campaigns and early 1970s feminism; in somewhat contradictory fashion, several editors interviewed (who similarly highlighted this as a major 'activist' issue at the time) tended both to insist that they did nothing to privelege a particular view on the matter and to take significant credit for the agreement's defeat – one suggesting that the paper "captured the zeitgeist" on campus in covering the issue (and saw it's defeat as a major success for the paper). See:

   Facts and Fiction Re: The Daily's Convictions." *McGill Daily*, 05/9/2001: 8.

[201] Confidentital source. Personal interview, January 2010.

[202] Ibid.

thing, the dorm thing," against a student union perceived as overly conservative (and as essentially a club for private-school alumni to spend money on things no one at the *Daily* would care to be involved with, according to this same editor), and an administration perceived to be overly secretive, authoritarian, and concerned with institutional priorities over those of students. In this 'big tent' instantiation of the *Daily*, it appears that the role of 'watchdog' over the student union[203] and administration, and 'voice of reason' amidst what some felt was a distinctly conservative political climate on campus was key to defining the paper's role.

As concerns normative orientations to journalistic practice, the insistence on 'professional' standards aligned with a stance that values political neutrality or impartiality *within* particular news pieces; that is, the paper took up the role of watchdog or journalistic skeptic in very much the way that Dubinsky describes mainstream outlets doing, justifying sustained attention to particular issues and refusal to take the parties involved at their word in the name of the 'public good' – but making concerted efforts to live up to, and maintaining rhetorical allegiance to, traditional news presentation which sought to present 'both sides' with seeming impartiality. The political inflection derived from the Statement and a more general left-wing orientation tended to be viewed as manifest primarily in story selection. According to Todd, in addition to the political reservations about past activist instantiations of the paper outlined above, there was "also an interest in an adherence to, and in pushing, more rigorous journalistic standards, in the sense of objectivity, of telling all of the sides of the story," the paper's political mandate being "mainly articulated through story choice, rather than in how we presented those stories."[204] As another editor (ca. 2002) put it, "our stories were really balanced, we were all really interested in journalism, we all

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[203] Antagonistic relations with the student union in the later 1990s ultimately culminated in a protracted incident in 2000, which no doubt fueled further antagonism; at the time, the Daily became embroiled in legal battles with the student union over questions related to their office space.
[204] Telephone interview, February 2010.

wanted to be journalists back then. We all took our craft very very seriously, so there was the politics, then there was the balance. I feel like the way the politics comes out in the paper was in the kinds of stories we cover, and our editorials."[205]

To a certain extent, this could be seen as related to an instrumental function which student newspapers have long been credited with: professional training. Indeed, it seems clear that many of those present at the time had an explicit interest in future journalistic careers. Former editors and/or DPS members Jason Chow (*Financial Post*), Ben Errett (*National Post*), Simon Rabinovitch (Reuters), Zach Dubinsky (Montreal *Gazette*; *National Post*; CBC), J. Kelly Nestruck (*National Post*; *Globe and Mail*), and others (all of whom were present towards the beginning of the decade) ultimately embarked on such a path – appearing to stand out as a group which has had, no doubt for a number of reasons, particular success in doing so. But professionalism, as articulated in the responses of those I spoke with who had been at the *Daily* in the early 2000s, does double duty in that it implies much more than an instrumental 'training' component; it also appears to signify, for some, an intellectual rigor and potential public legitimacy which stands in seeming opposition to its alternatives. As Todd puts it, the editorial teams associated with the transition described "turned the paper into a place where you actually got journalism training, and that was very very useful. And I think there was a greater intellectual discipline to it, you know, probably the people that were there before would disagree with that because, in theory, they may have brought a more uncompromising view…"[206]

Yet given the high turnover rates at a newspaper staffed by students enrolled in three- or four-year undergraduate programs, things can change quickly – if not necessarily in all respects, certainly in terms of perceptions of the 'mission' or 'guiding principles' and the identifications of the core group: professional, activist or otherwise. Another *Daily* editor,

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[205] Confidential source. Telephone interview, January 2010.
[206] Telephone interview, February 2010.

'Al' suggested to me that circa 2004-2005, a large number of editors were "basically activists in one way or another"; a lot of people (though not necessarily news writers) were in effect "activists who thought of the paper as a place to be activists, and basically hung out with other activists."[207] According to another editor at the time, 'Tom', who characterized the period immediately prior to his own tenure (what I've been referring to as the period of 'professionalization') as one in which the *Daily* was "run on the basis that this should be acceptable to everybody, along the lines of any mainstream journalistic publication," the difference was palpable. "When I was there," he notes, "in '04, '05, '06, seeing the direction it was going, it was definitely in a cycle of politicizing more and more and more." The *Daily*, rather than being a mouthpiece for other organizations or one project among many for its editors and staff, engendered "a sense of loyalty and institutional coherence. The *Daily* had that and was the major focal point for the activism of the people who worked for the paper. [...] we were our own kind of voice, our own kind of unit in the constellation. Aside from the reporting, we were our own political unit."[208]

Of course, the paper has been acknowledged as a left-wing bastion throughout the period of reference (and beyond), to the point at which many interviewees essentially described this as a simple point of fact, reinforced by the self-selection of 'progressive' people interested in working at the 'lefty paper' on campus, as opposed to what almost all former editors I spoke to described as its more 'conservative,' less critical, on-campus counterpart, The *Tribune*.[209] At any given time, however, The *Daily* boasts a variety of political (and journalistic) orientations that might broadly align with a somewhat diffuse 'left' or 'progressive' ethos; the overall configuration changes, though this should by no

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[207] Confidential Source. Telephone interview, January 2010.
[208] Confidential source. Telephone interview, January 2010.
[209] Indeed, in much the same way that – and perhaps more frequently than – the Daily defines itself explicitly against mainstream media (as evidenced here both in the pages of the paper and interviews), the paper is (though perhaps more so earlier in the decade), defined against the Tribune; a similar dynamic holds true for the Link, as touched upon in Chapter 3.

means be taken to imply that any period (from 2000-2010, at least) is marked by uniformity of opinion on political (or journalistic) matters. As 'Al' put it, among news editors working at one point in the mid-2000s, "one was basically a federal Liberal; one of them now works for the Liberals, and one of them works for the NDP. It wasn't just anti-capitalists. The Liberal got along fine with everyone, and thought of herself as progressive - and didn't have any trouble in that sense. But I don't think it could have gotten any more right wing than that without the person just not ever having ended up getting involved. The atmosphere, I think, was pretty obvious."[210]

In this period, a number of specific innovations sprung up in the news section, more or less explicitly with the object of allowing the editors different means to supplement or attenuate the effects of the 'straight news' form, which – at least according to some interviewees – largely kept to 'balanced' formulas, story selection remaining a primary means of seeking to fulfill the political mandate outlined in the Statement. 'Act Up,' which one interviewee described as a "weekly digest of activist opportunities," listed events (including upcoming happenings solicited from groups such as QPIRG) on and off campus, often on the third page. 'News Analysis' pieces (indeed, a common mainstream convention) allowed a further traversing of the boundaries between news and editorial without compromising the 'straight news' form, moving comment on current events and issues into the front section of the paper. 'From the Horse's Mouth' made a regular front-section feature of transcribed interviews with persons of interest, occasionally used to present more directly (unmediated by the voice of the writer) the views or positions of individuals associated with social movements or activism.[211] A series of profiles of local (on- and off-

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[210] Confidential source. Telephone interview, January 2010.
[211] Including, but not limited to, over the course of 2005 and 2006, former Black Panther Ashanti Alston, culture-jamming billboard artist Ron English, former Concordia Student Union VP and noted critic of Canadian foreign policy Yves Engler, and organizer for the radical-left Ontario Coalition Against Poverty. This regular feature provided a way to perform a function which is elsewhere (and

campus) activist groups also graced the pages in the middle of the decade, including radical-left and anti-capitalist groups such as No One is Illegal, Convergence des luttes anti-capitalistes (Montreal's Anti-capitalist Convergence, or CLAC), and the Coalition Opposed to Police Brutality (COBP). Along with the deployment of photos (including covers) and editorial and comment components of the paper, such diversity of form allows the presentation of content which could be – though of course form is only what you make of it – used to engage the political mandate of the paper to act as a 'voice to the voiceless'[212] and/or to support outside activism or social movement struggles. The use of such diverse forms of content – along with practices informing news writing which differ markedly from those of papers such as the *Gazette*, for example by employing relatively more unofficial sources giving substantive opinions about contentious issues (as is revealed in both a quantitative content analysis conducted on coverage of protest events and a more in-depth critical reading) – will be revisited in Chapter 6's examination of coverage of anti-globalization and anti-police brutality protest events.

From another angle, the division between a more 'professional' and a more 'activist' vision of the paper's mission can be seen to arise from a split priority between sometimes competing quality criteria: immediacy and/or discovery on the one hand, and interpretation and/or analysis on the other, between bringing new information to light and establishing context and significance (in this case, as inflected by the political mission established by the Statement). There are, as 2007-8 coordinating editor Drew Nelles puts it, "two ways of looking at it": "looking at [the *Daily*] straightforwardly as a paper looking to break news, looking at it as other student media outlets did," and looking at it as operating through the *Daily*'s "progressive mandate," which guided those at the paper in "seeking out news that

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at other times) often performed by writing news articles on activist speaking events, especially on-campus, and for Daily staff themselves to select potential interviewees.
[212] As so many Dailyites put it.

was a bit more community minded [...] interpreting the stories we were supposed to cover in light of the Statement of Principles [...] looking for stories that examined power structures, that challenged power structures," and "trying to connect McGill with the broader community outside of it."[213] Yet how the Statement is interpreted is always relatively open; it "depends on the people involved." As Nelles suggests, there are "always dominant personalities on the editorial board, and the back and forth between those personalities always ends up shaping it a lot." Given this dynamic of "competing personalities" there is inevitably an aspect of:

> competing ideologies, so while there were very few people who could be called actually conservative at the *Daily* – obviously it's kind of reductive to talk about the political spectrum in terms of left and right because, as I witnessed at the *Daily*, people kind of mock it as this leftist rag, but you actually got a sense of the huge range of ideological vision that can exist among people whom you describe broadly as 'left wing.' [...] Some people were quite radical, some people were what you would call liberal, whether big 'L,' like card-carrying party members, or small 'l' liberal in the American sense, and that was always a source of tension.[214]

And connections with activists, as appears to be commonly the case at both papers, were often close – though not only for ideological reasons (and not necessarily without conflict). As Nelles puts it:

> Some editors really came from an activism background, and so even if they hadn't been involved in particular groups before, they knew local and campus activists pretty well. [...] In my time anyway, because campus activist groups wind up being a source of news a lot, you wind up kind of dealing with them much as you would any close contact, so it becomes much like student journalists' relationship with a student politician – and those actually do become pretty close, as they do in professional journalism, whether people want to admit that or not. You wind up courting people because they have information that you want to publish. [...] It definitely can become quite cozy; whether that is appropriate or not is a matter of interpretation.[215]

Thus, proximity and forms of mutual dependence (similar to those described by Bennett (2003) or Neveu (2002) in the context of mainstream political reporting) also seem to inform relationships in news-gathering related to activist issues at student papers such as

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[213] Personal interview, February 2010.
[214] ibid.
[215] ibid.

The *Daily*. However, the apparent movement of the "cycle of politicization" located in the mid-2000s appears to have more continuing resonance with recent instantiations than does the more 'professionally' oriented vision of the earlier part of the decade, suggesting that such considerations, while important, need to be placed alongside less tacit normative orientations on the part of student journalists.

Still, even those more inclined to an 'activist' or politicizing view of the paper insist on certain key journalistic standards – at least some modicum of 'distance' seems necessary. As 2009-2010 coordinating editor Stephen Davis puts it, the paper's relationship with activists is "a good one," featuring "regular contacts," though the paper is careful to maintain some distance and avoid aligning itself uncritically with any particular group. While "[t]here are times when *Daily* writers are involved with activist groups we're covering," the paper makes it a priority to ensure that writers are "not participating in the protest they're covering" – a point which raises the question of 'conflict of interest' and the journalistic limits to an 'activist' orientation (one which returns as particularly significant in the case of the crisis at the *Link* in the following section).

Certain standards (notably prospective 'conflict of interest' issues), notwithstanding a view by which some measure of bias is inevitable (even desirable, when explicit, as 'more honest' and as offering a potentially productive political inflection), are not to be transgressed. Nonetheless, in contrast to interviewees from the earlier part of the decade who tended to express more reserve in articulating their (real or rhetorical) relationships with 'activists,' Davis (and here it is worth recalling his comments on objectivity cited on page 182) suggests that those involved with the *Daily* "sort of think as activists ourselves."[216] Recent editors are quick to emphasize the 'quality' of the *Daily* (certainly vis-à-vis on-campus competition from the *Tribune*, but also with regard to mainstream media);

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[216] Personal interview, February 2010.

however, the idea that the paper's content can be 'quality journalism' is less averse to a political inflection which goes beyond story selection and simply providing a 'public forum' – or even exercising the paper's editorial voice, op-ed spots, photos and covers in service of keeping an issue alive and giving activists a push – to offer a 'deeper' understanding which keeps in mind the shallow 'objectivity' attributed to much mainstream news coverage, seeks to analyze power relations, and which may align itself clearly with activist positions.

### Case 2: Crisis at the Link, 2000-2001

Somewhat divergent from the situation at the *Daily*, the *Link*, at the dawn of the past decade, appears to have identified more explicitly as an 'activist paper' (much as a rundown of the paper's 'proudest moments' described it on the occasion of its 30th anniversary, a decade later). 'Professionalism' clearly has importance, but, by the account of several interviewees, at least, editors and staff tended to view the paper as both an 'activist' endeavor and a journalistic one (indeed, the two, as for many at both papers, are often viewed not as mutually exclusive, but potentially complementary). Still, the tension between the two notions is again prominent. Indeed, such tensions (and larger issues in the University) flared into a major conflict in the early part of the decade, in which the paper was accused of bias against Concordia's then-'radical' student union[217] and prominent campus activist group Palestinian Solidarity For Human Rights (SPHR), being undemocratic in its operations, and unaccountable to students. This 'crisis' is the central focus of this section, and key articles, events and efforts at self-defense on the part of the paper are described in some detail following a brief description of how some interviewees saw their

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[217] *A series of Concordia Student Union administrations, roughly from 1999-2002/3, were strongly associated with radical-left activism, including a range of students', anti-corporate (and anti-capitalist), pro-Palestinian, anti-racist and other causes; detractors held that some of their actions were overly confrontational and/or objected to a political focus beyond clear-cut 'student issues'. Israel-Palestine issues were also a flashpoint for conflict, earning Concordia the moniker of 'Gaza U'.*

role leading into this period, with particular regard to tensions between 'professional' and 'activist' orientations.

The fact that many *Link* staff were journalism students (as many are now, whereas McGill has no school of journalism)[218] sometimes further inflects the discussion of this basic tension. 2000-2001 editor-in-chief Ariel Troster, a journalism student and protagonist in the controversy that arose that year, suggests that one attraction of the *Link* was that she "found the program kind of boring and conservative" whereas she "got into journalism because I was interested in social justice."[219] As another editor (ca. 2002) and journalism student put it, "I don't think that journalism school really influenced what we did at the *Link* at all. Because that was really a professional setting; how to write, how to interview, but there were no values involved."[220] The paper's mission, according to Troster, at "the height of the No Logo, anti-globalization era" lay in "seeking to promote social change through student media, and to keep the university administrators at bay, and to provide an alternative voice to what we were seeing in the mainstream press at the time."[221]

Similar to comments which cast the *Daily* as its "own political unit," and suggest that student journalism itself was seen by many practitioners as an outlet for (or a form of) activism, Troster recalls that "some of us were involved with other stuff, but the newspaper kind of became our whole life, it became our little social justice thing that we were doing." After joining, "the lefty newspaper [...] became my social circle and my entire existence for those three years." Without being a mouthpiece for particular social movement organizations, those working at the paper "really felt like we were part of the movement,

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[218] Other than the de facto one at the Daily.
[219] Telephone interview, March 2010.
[220] Confidential source. Personal interview, February 2010.
[221] Telephone interview. March 2010.

even if we weren't actively engaging in other groups on campus, because we were certainly reporting on them, and taking a look at them, and trying to give them a boost."[222]

Yet events arising from the Fall of 2000 onwards were to prove challenging to this picture of the *Link*'s role, as coverage (or non-coverage) of issues concerning the CSU and SPHR, and how the paper dealt with complaints, sparked ire and attempts to dismiss the editorial board and overhaul the organization's structure. The period was a time of crisis for The *Link* and its editors and staff, and one in which they appealed to 'freedom of the press' and institutional autonomy, the 'watchdog' role, the need to avoid 'conflicts of interest' and the desire to present 'both sides' of important issues in mounting a defense against those who found fault with the paper and its content.[223] The saga was to last, in immediate terms, into the following summer – and stands out as the most prominent episode of contention to implicate the *Link* directly over the entire period of reference for this thesis.

Initially, the controversy emerges as a result of the *Link*'s approach to coverage on two fronts: their handling of a significant financial fraud revealed at the CSU in October 2000, the airing of an editorial call to remove the CSU executive (subsequently taken up by others), and their coverage of Israel-Palestine issues (especially in relation to SPHR) on campus, coupled with the treatment accorded a contributor associated with SPHR who had covered the organization's protest events. According to a timeline of events published by the *Link* amid the height of the controversy in January 2001,[224] the first incident to provoke criticism was an October 17th article by editor-in-chief Ariel Troster, titled 'Israeli-Palestinian conflict sparks tensions at Concordia.'[225] The article presents a picture of

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[222] Ibid.

[223] Readers should note that the description of events here is almost entirely dependent on former Link editors, and on material published in the newspaper. As such, I cannot claim to adequately represent the positions of everyone involved, merely to describe the situation from the perspective of staff while attempting to outline key efforts and complaints which are a matter of public record.

[224] "*Link*'s autonomy threatened: a chronicle of events." *The Link*, 30/1/2001: 5.

[225] Troster, Ariel. "Israeli-Palestinian conflict sparks tensions at Concordia." *The Link*, 17/10/2000: 3.

contending groups at a high level of strain – and focuses on the possibility of violence or intimidation, opening with an account of a student uttering a death threat ("I'm going to kill you...you kill little children"), and being "physically restrained by five or six other men, some of whom were volunteers with Concordia's student group Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights." The opening further suggests that "this incident, combined with a series of anti-Jewish attacks documented by B'nai Brith, has student leaders concerned that further violence could escalate among students unless both the university administration and the Concordia Student Union take active steps to quell the tension." Threats of violence against SPHR are reported as well, but the framing and specific content of the story prompted criticism that the article paints a distorted picture of the group.

Among the elements of the article more precisely fingered as transgressions against SPHR (and Palestinian solidarity activists more generally) was a mention in the opening line of "Israel's occupied territories" (which, while perhaps a slip on the part of the author, reads as a highly politicized alternative to 'Palestinian occupied territories') and the inclusion of a photograph of a man carrying a child at an SPHR-organized demonstration, both bearing placards depicting a swastika and star of David separated by an (=) sign. The article juxtaposes statements from SPHR president Sami Nazzal and Hillel-Concordia co-president Avi Feingold; the former, cited in his disapproval of the placards pictured, suggests that the group "[tries] to take away controversial messages," but "can't control 3000 people," while Feingold insists on the group's ultimate responsibility for such protests, stating the "[s]ilence is an admission of guilt." The latter further suggests that SPHR's posters (in the words of the author, who describes them as "tamer") "create a dangerous climate for Jewish students, and should be censored."

Some awkward or questionable narrative connections and transitions exacerbate matters. For example, the article states that "Much of the debate [over how to prevent

possible violence] centres around campaign literature produced by SPHR [....] While none of the SPHR-sponsored literature contains anti-Jewish messages, people were spotted carrying placards equating swastikas with the Jewish Star of David at two[226] of the group's demonstrations in Montreal last week." Given that there is no discussion of the actual content of SPHR-produced materials, the operation could be perceived as an equation, Nazzal's statements notwithstanding. The following passage, which concludes the article, presents an awkward juxtaposition which could leave a critical reader with what appears to be a tacit attribution of responsibility:

> Boisvert [Dean of Students at Concordia] is meeting with leaders from both Jewish and Palestinian on-campus groups today, and hopes to soothe the tensions among Concordia students. Both Nazzal and Feingold said they'd be willing to meet, but Nazzal made it clear that he wouldn't stand for any censorship of SPHR's literature.
> "Everybody's going to deny accountability [for the violent incidents]," said Feingold. "It is the responsibility of every group on campus to promote peace."

While much of this could be attributed to potentially unintentional aspects of presentation (reminded of the piece, Troster attributes lapses such as the mention of "Israel's occupied territories" to youth and ignorance, and acknowledges the understandable objections of SPHR members who felt the pictured placards were being presented as symbolic of their movement), the impression that the piece portrayed SPHR in a negative light prompted letters and requests for the *Link*'s budget and constitution from members. According to the *Link*'s January 30th timeline, Nazzal yelled at Troster in their offices "for over an hour," and asked that she "interview him on the spot, and write and accommodating article about his group." "Nazzal," the paper writes, "asserts that the *Link* owes student groups positive coverage of their events."[227]

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[226] The paper later printed an erratum noting that the placards were only seen at one, not two, demonstrations; the erratum was printed six weeks later, after an official complaint was heard by the LPS Board of Directors.
[227] "*Link*'s autonomy threatened: a chronicle of events." *The Link*, 30/1/2001: 5.

Ten days later, relations with SPHR took another hit as a story by contributor Linda Charbonneau, covering an SPHR protest, was "pulled" by *Link* editors. According to the *Link*, when editors had earlier learned that Charbonneau had "close ties" with the organization, a decision was taken to "stop assigning her stories about the group, until it can be determined whether her involvement with the group constitutes a conflict of interest."[228] The news editor, apparently, had nonetheless accepted this particular story subsequently (potentially indicating some dissensus over the standards around 'conflict of interest'); however, it was pulled on production night, and no coverage of the event appeared. The next week's edition contended with a significant number of letters (printing ten) questioning the non-coverage of the event, including some that accuse the editors of racism. As Troster recalls, the issue for those editors who took the decision was one of journalistic principle:

> it reached the point where we decided with our very very small amount of journalistic training, you know, good student journalists that we were, that it was sort of not ok for her to be reporting quote-unquote 'objectively' on these demonstrations if she was actively involved, so we basically told her that she was welcome to write opinion pieces on this group's activities, but we didn't want her reporting on them any more.[229]

Whereas standards over conflict of interest issues are more clear-cut in professional settings, this is far less so the case at student newspapers, where volunteer contributors often cover issues and events which align with their own personal or political interests. The difficult tension between activism and 'professional' journalistic standards remains recurrent, as Steve Faguy suggests (referring – though he was there at the time of the crisis – more broadly to his time at the *Link*, which lasted three more years, rather than to this particicular incident):

> It was an issue a lot of people struggled with. Can you be involved with an activist group and cover it? In the bigger media, the line is a bit thicker, because you're expected not to do that. If you want to be involved in your pet issues you can, but you can't cover them. But the Concordia community is much smaller. You will develop friendships, you will develop contacts [...] it's volunteer, so people will

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[228] Ibid.
[229] Telephone interview, March 2010.

cover what they want to cover, what they're willing to devote their free time to. And that will usually be issues they agree with. So if someone is covering a protest, chances are that person sort of agrees with the message.[230]

It appears that the ethical limit-case for a student journalism often willing to freely admit that everyone has their biases (and, indeed, that the political mission of the paper in fact mandates them to pursue some of those which might analyze power/hierarchy, favour coverage of certain voices and issues otherwise unheard or excluded), is 'conflict of interest.' It appears that Charbonneau, in this instance, was selected as an example of such a 'limit-case,' and that some felt that the appropriate distance between reporter and subject, and the appropriate space of (partially disavowed, but nonetheless valued) 'neutrality' or impartiality had been breached. That this happened at precisely the time when the paper was under fire from the group in question may or may not be coincidental; that it happened as it did surely added a great deal to the displeasure of those who already – and all the more in light of issues arising with the CSU at the same time – felt that their interests, positions and messages were not well represented at the paper. When critics organized against the editorial board, Charbonneau's story being "pulled," though it may have constituted sound journalistic ethics for some, surely looked like censorship to others.

In the meantime, the *Link* had published, on October 24th, an article titled "CSU kept fraud under wraps." At the heart of the story was a financial fraud perpetrated by VP Finance Sheryll Navidad (a position then appointed by the President), who was ultimately convicted of embezzling over $190,000 of CSU funds over the course of several months; the missing funds came to the attention of the CSU executive in August, and the fraud was announced publically in October. Navidad had written and cashed a series of cheques, unbeknownst to others in the CSU; CSU President Rob Green, however, was revealed to have signed a number of blank cheques used in the fraud, apparently to ensure that

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[230] Personal interview, February 2010.

necessary funds could be released while he was away on summer vacation. This aspect of the case (which, among other oversights, Faguy holds portrayed the CSU executive as "incompetent in this instance, as most student executives are"[231]), as well as the delay in making the missing funds public (which the executive sought to justify on legal grounds), was the basis for a story which treated the matter as having systemic ramifications.

The story initially broke when Troster was brought in for a private meeting with Green and the Dean of Students and informed of relevant details of the fraud. Their approach, she recounts, was "very very careful," but the story the *Link* published on the 24th "was not just 'student union victimized by treasurer' it was like 'president pre-signs stack of blank cheques and then went on vacation,' 'lack of financial controls leads to massive fraud.'"[232] In the same issue, the *Link* published an editorial calling for a recall of the executive – a slate which had only recently obtained accreditation for the Student Union (a key point given that the accreditation referendum occurred in September, after Green had learned about the scope of financial irregularities, but before they were disclosed), and which stood out for its 'activist' reputation and commitments on a number of issues. The CSU executive, as can be garnered from a letter by Green in the *Link*'s October 31st issue, where he states with sarcasm that the *Link* should "never mind" the "useless details" which suggest that he acted in good faith and "just use every sensationalistic trick in the book to do what you've wanted to do since I took office: boot the radical!"[233] was, according to Troster, "absolutely furious," seeing the paper's take on the fraud case as as "an absolute betrayal."[234]

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[231] Ibid.

[232] Telephone interview, March 2010.

[233] Green, Rob. "The Link has no shame." Letter. *The Link*, 31/10/2000: 15.

[234] The Link, incidentally, chose to refute a specific allegation in the letter that the paper had failed to act as 'watchdog' when CSU administrations in the 1990s had racked up large debts, inserting a text-box which "invites members of the Concordia community to peruse our archives" where they would "discover that the Link was extremely critical of the Rebecca Aldworth and Daniel Gagnon administrations, even providing extensive coverage of Gagnon's recall in 1996."

As Troster summarizes, "ultimately the issues became conflated." Both SPHR and the CSU, closely affiliated at the time, had "major grievances with the editorial board, and ultimately it became a bit of a mess." There arose an explicit contest over "who was the real activist, who was really radical,"[235] and the entire affair that followed was, as she puts it, "a shock to the system of the really earnest, politically progressive people who were involved in the newspaper at the time."[236]

The most significant reaction to the controversy from those displeased with the *Link* emerged in the form of a petition to dissolve the paper, spearheaded by 'The *Link* Accountability and Democracy Committee," consisting of Charbonneau, Aaron Mate,[237] and Laith Marouf.[238] At the same time, postering and grassroots organizing against the *Link*'s editorial board complemented more formal efforts. Posters with Troster's picture were posted throughout the Hall building, asking how much money the editor made (roughly $800 for the year in honoraria, she recalls); a Montreal *Gazette* article[239] at the time reports more than 500 signatures collected within 10 days. The preamble to the petition states the following:

> Whereas it is our belief that the *Link* Publication Society (hereafter referred to as the *Link*) has repeatedly violated the standards of journalistic integrity and fairness by printing one-sided articles, censoring and distorting the work of writers with political views in divergence to those of *Link* editorial staff, had been biased against

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[235] One letter compares the paper to a Volvo ad spotted on the back of a bus, touting the "reVOLVOlution": "Volvo's use of revolutionary chic is the same kind of exploitation that we are submitted to by the Link. The Link weakens our university's progressive community by feigning to support the progressives and at the same time avoiding, downplaying or misrepresenting them." See:
    Tarantini, Marina. "Link isn't revolutionary." Letter. *The Link*, 14/11/2000: 22.
[236] Telephone interview, March 2010.
[237] Later, a CSU VP and one of the main figures presented in the documentary *Discordia*, which details the events and personalities surrounding the Netanyahu protest in 2002.
[238] An SPHR member, and still-prominent Palestinian solidarity activist also involved with independent radio at McGill's CKUT.
[239] Lampert, Allison. "Concordia paper under attack." *Montreal Gazette*, 03/2/2001: A3.
    The article notably reverses the Link's own timeline of events, stating (with the Link's timeline as its source) that the first event which prompted critics to become "more vocal" was the October 24 editorial criticizing Green, and that the "second" was the October 17th article on Israel-Palestine tensions at Concordia (needless to say, the dates on the articles were not noted).

certain student groups, and has refused to print letters to the editor[240] or articles critical of the *Link*'s internal processes and politics and has thereby blocked student participation in the paper; [...][241]

It goes on to specifically demand that *Link* staff "make the appropriate decisions (including amendments to the *Link*'s constitution if necessary) to allow that,": 1) editorial staff "resign or be dismissed" and a "special general meeting (with a quorum of 30 members)" be held to elect a new staff, with all undergraduates having the right to vote, 2) that the *Link* make all financial and administrative information pertaining to the paper available upon request,[242] and 3) that the provisions for staff membership (and therefore voting rights in editorial elections and other internal decisions) be reduced to a minimum of two contributions, including letters to the editor. If these conditions were not immediately met, it proposes a referendum question (which the petition suggests should be held by the *Link*'s Board of Directors, but proposes for inclusion on the CSU General Election ballot "if the Board refuses.") The proposed question reads as follows:

> "Are you in favour of removing the student fee, office space, and all assets of the *Link* Publication Society and transferring the student fee, office space and all other assets of the *Link* Publication Society to a new student publication society who's [sic] constitution shall be created and officers elected at an open meeting of students on Wednesday April 11th 2001?"

The *Link*'s immediate reaction to this, and to other allegations and complaints leveled against the editorial board, was to publish an issue in which it presented the petition to readers alongside and "open letter" to readers, which set out the editors' position. The same issue included the timeline of events discussed above, and an all-black cover with the bold

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[240] This specific complaint presumably refers, at least in part, to letters sent in response to the non-coverage of the SPHR protest; the Link refused to publish some, which were declared "libelous."

[241] "A petition calling for accountability and democracy within the Link" Document produced by The Link Accountability and Democracy Committee, reprinted in the *Link*, 30/1/2001: 3.

[242] This is in fact a serious issue; according to Troster, the Link received "bad legal advice," in the face of CSU officials and others requesting such information. The paper's lawyer reportedly suggested that there was no obligation to make this information available, except at Annual General Meetings. In retrospect, the lack of transparency surely added fuel to the fire.

white headline: "Question: What do you do when a newspaper doesn't print what you tell them to? Answer: You Shut it down!"

FIGURE 1: LINK COVER 31/1/2001
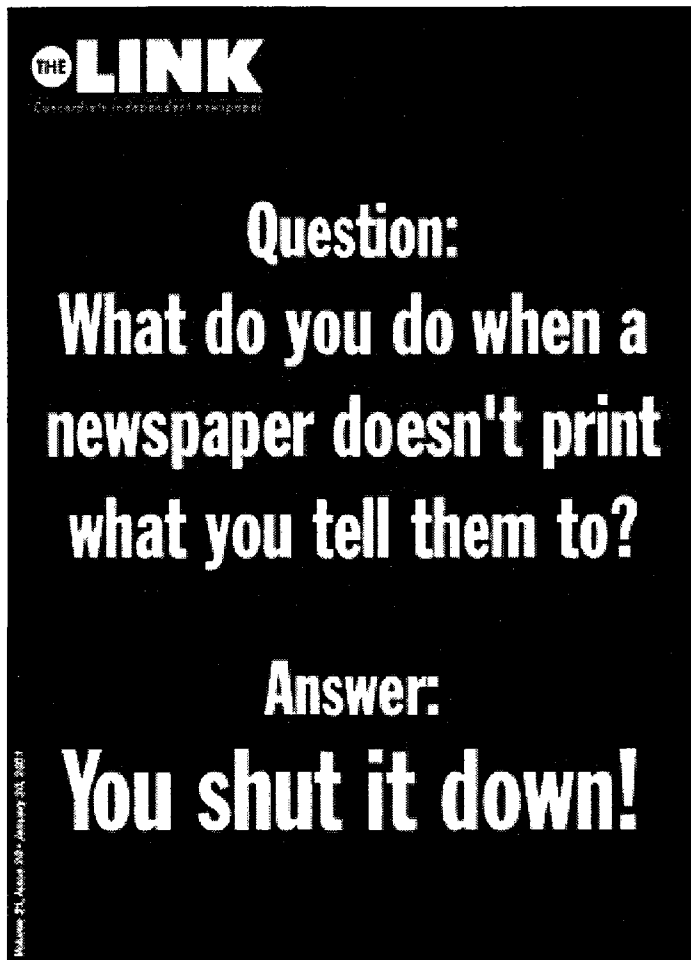


The 'open letter'[243] suggests that the paper welcomes criticism, and seeks to respond to "stories circulating at Concordia [...] stories that the *Link* is irresponsible, that the *Link* is biased, that the *Link* doesn't cover university events, and that the *Link* is generally a bad newspaper." While "controversy raging across the pages of the *Link*" is a good thing ("gratifying, because it shows that we're doing our job"), it suggests that criticism is:

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[243] "An open letter to Link readers." *The Link*, 30/1/2000: 3.

being used by those who would silence the *Link* because the *Link* is saying things they don't want heard. The *Link* is not printing what the Concordia Student Union wants us to print. We're not printing what politically-motivated student groups want us to print. Because as an independent student voice, we have a responsibility to remain critical and autonomous.

Addressing the petition directly,[244] the paper asserts that "its allegations seem pretty serious," and that "they would be, if they were true"; the allegations, however, are cast as "outrageous, slanderous, libelous, and clearly defamatory." The fact that the paper gets "complaints from people on both sides of an issue that we were biased the other way," is presented (presumably as evidence of 'balance,' inoculating the paper from the claimed primacy of particular biases), and the question of "censorship" is addressed thus:

> First of all, there is a big difference between editing and censorship. As members of an editorial board, it is our responsibility to edit articles for length, clarity, quality of research, fairness and depth of knowledge. It is also our job to select articles for publication, and yes, this is a subjective process.

The piece also notes that those at the paper are "not paid professionals [...] just students like you," perhaps seeking to identify with readers and diffuse some of the criticism leveled at their journalistic competence by appealing (at the same time that the autonomy of the press was their key point of defense) to the fact that the paper is a learning environment – not to mention addressing question raised about remuneration, which is essentially token. The bottom line according to the *Link*, however, is that:

> Constructive criticism is productive. Trying to overthrow a newspaper's editorial board, scrap its constitution, fire its employees,[245] appropriate its space and seize its assets are intimidation tactics that are anything but productive.
> Don't be fooled for a moment. This petition is not about democracy or accountability. It is an assault by those who want to stop the *Link* from saying things they don't want people to hear.

The accompanying timeline (on the facing page) further details the fact that Charbonneau had filed a complaint, which was heard by the LPS Board of Directors; though

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[244] Perhaps addressing the issue more indirectly, the headline for a story on a how-to activist workshop in the same issue reads "Activism 101: how to force people to listen to you."
[245] Incidentally, all three paid employees of the Link left during the course of the 'crisis' and had to be replaced – as Cuppage relates in his report at CUP's 2002 annual conference. See:
CUP Delegate Binder 64, January 2002: n.p.

the specifics of the hearing remain confidential ("to protect the integrity of the process"), an errata regarding the October 17th article on Israel-Palestine tensions at Concordia is noted.[246] Aside from this, and the paper's own prior reaction to the situation, it notes a number of emails and conversations (both overheard and involving *Link* staff) which indicate that CSU figures including Rob Green, CSU VP Communications Tom Keefer, and a CSU councillor had, at various times, explicitly discussed taking action against the *Link* at an institutional level.[247] The timeline concludes with the then-just-released petition.

Appearing at the same time as the *Link*'s problems with the CSU and SPHR, and seemingly representing staff use of the news and feature pages to contextualize their own struggle by emphasizing stories framed to present student media as set upon by powerful forces (such as corporations, student unions and administration), a number of articles outline the troubles of various student newspapers. Already, in the issue which broke the CSU fraud story, a news piece (editorializing somewhat) bemoans the fact that "[c]orporate city papers threaten the independent student press on university campuses across Canada,"[248] highlighting a *Gazette* effort to boost youth readership with free papers. On the page facing the timeline in the January 30 issue, the story (a CUP wire piece) [249] of Mount Saint Vincent University's *The Picaro* appears, noting its potentially imminent demise as the

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[246] The erratum, printed November 28, 2000, officially corrected the "Israel's occupied territories" miscue and noted that the swastika = Star of David placards were seen at only one, rather than two, SPHR demonstrations, counter to the original assertion.

[247] Claims by Link staff include one anonymous contributor's description of an overheard conversation in which two students discussed with CSU VP Tom Keefer what appeared to a be a plan to negotiate with editors and effect change 'from the inside' by becoming a "regular presence in the Link's office and at their meetings," with Keefer mentioning – based on what appeared to be significant research – the alternative possibility of having the paper's funding cut (due to what was claimed to be a disjuncture between actual funding and what was mandated by the paper's original agreement with the university) or the circulation of a petition with the aim "to bring a question to a referendum during [the Spring] election." *See:*
   "Pressure tactics." *The Link*, 30/1/2000: 5.

[248] Cipriani, Lisa. "Free newspapers threaten student press." *The Link*, 24/10/2000: 7.

[249] Gillis, Andrew. "Halifax student newspaper may fold – student union holds funds." *The Link*,
   30/1/2001: 5.

student union withheld its funds (having declared the paper an afterthought due to budget shortfalls).[250]

The February 6 issue (containing the *Link* FAQ, discussed below) contains three stories on the same theme, all written by *Link* editors (and listed under a 'Feature' banner); one recounts the struggles of three prairie papers with their respective student unions, including a case where the University of Manitoba Student Union acted on the concerns of a student group formed by an ex-student politician who claimed to have been maligned by the paper and others who alleged "unfair coverage and left-wing political bias," soon extending their focus to alleged financial mismanagement (later refuted).[251] Another lists a series of cases in the US where student newspapers had issues pulled from the stands or content interfered with by student politicians, administration or activist groups.[252] The third details the damage done at the *McGill Daily* (a cut in the number of issues produced, $40,000 in legal costs, and less office space divided between two locations) following legal wrangling over the right of the Student Union to force the paper out of its on-campus location.[253]

The week following the January 30 issue, the *Link* published a '*Link* FAQ'[254] which reiterated many of the earlier positions, as well as defending staff membership requirements, justifying the refusal to release financial documents on legal grounds and by asserting that "there are structures in place for dealing with editorial concerns, and demanding to re-tool the budget and constitution mid-year are not among those methods."

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[250] CUP President Jeremy Nelson had earlier written a letter of solidarity, referencing both the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and CUP's commitment to editorial autonomy for its member papers, which calls upon the CSU to "act responsibly to diffuse this matter as quickly as possible, therefore serving both the interests of the students and the rights of all to a free media – rights that supersede all other matters regardless of how pressing they seem at the time." See:
       Nelson, Jeremy. "Freedom of the press unquestionable." Letter. *The Link*, 05/12/2000: 22.
[251] Biberstein, Rene. "Prairie presses face threats from student unions." *The Link*, 06/2/2001: 15.
[252] Cuppage, Josh. "American university newspapers under attack." *The Link*, 06/2/2001: 15.
[253] Savoie, Pierre-Olivier. "Feud hurt McGill Daily." *The Link*, 06/2/2001: 13.
[254] "Link FAQ." *The Link*, 06/2/2001: 19. [note: FAQ = 'Frequently Asked Questions']

One of the key provisions in the petition's call to 'democratize' the paper – aside from the dismissal of the editorial board (though editors, it should be noted, would be free to run for re-election), and ultimately the dissolution of the *Link* as an institution if staff failed to comply – was to significantly lower the threshold for voting membership in elections for editorial positions and other internal decisions. Specifically, the petition called for two published letters to be recognized as sufficient for voting rights, rather than the four 'recognized contributions' (which did not include letters) otherwise required.[255] This, of course, would massively expand the pool of persons with voting rights at a paper mandated to publish at least one letter per student, per issue, wherever such letters are received. Josh Cuppage, who was at the paper at the time, summarized the problem thus:

> If it's in the paper's mandate to print every letter [...] to have the head of this or that student association write two letters and all of a sudden they get a vote, to have staff status, that's a problem [...] If its hard to run a paper on a day to day basis under normal circumstances, to have so many cooks in the kitchen, like they would have had, would have been more difficult.[256]

The issues (i.e. the objections of *Link* staff) which arise around such a revamping of the criteria for voting rights centre largely around two implications: 1) logistical difficulties with "having too many cooks in the kitchen," and 2) the degree of influence or control which staff feel is appropriate to be granted students (i.e. official, fee-paying, members of the *Link* Publication Society) who do not actually participate directly in the production of the newspaper (though the concern is particularly acute with regards to students inclined to represent the interests of outside groups at the paper). The second speaks more directly to the issue at hand, and to what detractors found 'undemocratic' about the newspaper. As Cuppage suggests,

> they thought there was too much power in the hands of too few people, that there was sort of a small clique of 3 or 4 editors who were deciding on what this headline was going to say, and where this story would be placed. And they probably charged

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[255] See Chapter 3.
[256] Telephone interview, February 2010.

that there was a lot of overt politics at play [not just] in small decisions, and in bigger decisions, but in the day-to-day operations of the paper.[257]

To some extent, this is certainly true; the question, however, revolves around the perceived legitimacy of this state of affairs, the imperative to journalistic autonomy, and the view of those at the *Link* that they were best-placed to make such decisions (tending to defend them in terms which evoked standards specific to the field of journalism – much as their detractors held them to be in violation of "the standards of journalistic integrity and fairness"). Participation in the production of the paper is a long-held standard for differentiating 'staff' from 'membership,' and is seen to confer legitimacy on the privilege accorded to the former (and to editors elected by the staff) in making decisions about content and internal operations – decisions which inevitably reflect their own normative orientations (their inevitable biases, as it were), and incur a measure of arbitrary power.

The question proposed on the petition never went to a vote – though the issue did not end there. Subsequently, the CSU created and passed a bill titled 'The Student's Bill of Democratic Rights," which went to a referendum in March 2001. The measure essentially mandated that independent fee levy groups be accountable to the CSU Judicial Board, and fulfill a series of requirements assuring the 'democratic' nature of their operations (i.e. conform to CSU-mandated organizational structures). Given importance placed on *autonomy from any external body by those at the Link, such measures were seen by the* paper's staff as completely unacceptable (and as an extension of earlier efforts to gain control over or influence the operations of the paper).

At the time, in a somewhat unprecedented move, the *Link* and on-campus rival the *Concordian* (which would, of course, have been subject to the CSU measure, if instituted) published a joint editorial, "Freedom of the press under attack."[258] Neither paper appears

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[257] Ibid.
[258] "Freedom of the press under attack." *The Link*, 13/3/2001: 15.

content with Tom Keefer's description of the bill as "a beacon of democracy," portraying it rather as "the student government's attempt to impose arbitrary rules on groups that have no legal or constitutional connection with the CSU." The commitment of the CSU to lobby against fee levies going to groups that did not accept the requirements is presented as "ordering the press to play by their rules, or face destruction."

Noting that the imposition of conditions on the respective papers' internal governance contravenes the 1986 autonomy agreement reached with the CSU's predecessor, CUSA, and that – consonant with CUP's policy on autonomy – any imposition on the part of a student union is considered likely to infringe on independence (and therefore quality and integrity), the two papers roundly condemn the bill. They also note that while the *Concordian*'s staff learned about it less than 24 hours prior to its adoption by council, other groups – such as the People's Potato (a free/by-donation vegan collective kitchen), Le Frigo Vert (an organic/fair-trade food cooperative), and the Concordia Women's Centre[259] – had apparently been consulted, with accommodating changes to the bill apparently still ongoing at the time. In sum, the two papers tell readers that the bill "is the CSU's desperate attempt to harness control over the student press," and urge them to vote it down, "[b]ecause a democracy without a free press is no democracy at all." As well as making efforts to sway voters, the *Link* also appealed to the CSU Judicial Board, arguing that the CSU lacked legal jurisdiction to impose conditions on the operations of autonomous student groups; in order to give the argument due consideration, the ballots on the referendum question were sealed. As it happens, the Board never met on the issue, and the sealed ballots were lost. The result of voting on the question remains unknown.

The *Link*'s General Assembly in 2001, given the state of controversy, was expected to be an occasion for conflict, with concerned students (including CSU and SPHR members, as

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[259] All more closely associated with the 'radical' union's political base than the student newspapers.

well as members of pro-Zionist student group Hillel, hoping to counteract the possible influence of anti-Zionist activists on the paper) expected to attend to forward motions in favour of their respective positions. Contrary to LPS bylaws, the meeting was pushed back from the first week of April to the 20th. This is particularly interesting, and significant, in that the 21st marked the opening of the FTAA Summit in Quebec City, a major rallying point for a variety of activist elements. Faguy suggests that the reasoning behind this was that, given the date:

> all of the activists are in Quebec City while the Link holds its General Assembly. Even some of the people in the Link, the Link's news editor who was sort of leftist, but was in Quebec City at the time, sort of criticized that. The Link sent a bunch of reporters, along with all of the other newspapers, to Quebec City as well. The move backfired, no quorum. There were like twelve people there.[260]

Rescheduled for mid-May, the meeting was moved to the BE Building at 1257 Guy, according to Faguy, "to try and get it out of the Hall building, try and reduce the effects of the student activist community."[261] The tactic, however, proves ineffective, and – by Faguy's estimate[262] – 70 to 80 people "take over" and the paper's staff "walk out" in the midst of efforts to change the paper's bylaws and to appoint people to the Board of Directors. As Cuppage, who initially chaired that meeting, recalls: "at one point there were literally competing motions from both constituencies over whether the door was going to stay open at the meeting. That's how it went."[263] By his estimate, the meeting was roughly split between 30 students associated with SPHR and 30 with Hillel, both groups having held meetings to "mobilize their community" immediately prior. By Troster's recollection, "the student union had drawn chalk arrows on the sidewalk, 'Link annual general meeting!' to point people to be able to get there. People walked in waving red and black anarchist flags.

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[260] Personal interview, February 2010.
[261] Ibid.
[262] Troster mentioned those seeking to challenge the editorial board bringing "100 people" to the meeting (attributing this, in part, to the paper's insistence on not releasing financial data, except, as required, at the AGM – a move which "backfired.") Cuppage estimates 30 from each of SPHR/CSU and Hillel, in addition to Link staff.
[263] Telephone interview, February 2010.

Not kidding." With the assistance of some "CSU Robert's Rules nerds" who were particularly adept at managing meeting procedure, the chair was deposed and a number of resolutions were passed (prompting the walk-out); from Troster's perspective "it was like a political coup."[264]

Unfortunately for posterity, requests for AGM minutes from this and other meetings in the early part of the decade were unable to turn up any documentation outlining the specifics of what happened. Regardless, the end result of that meeting was a confrontation between the existing editorial board and those who had passed new resolutions. The editorial board refused to recognize the results of the AGM, and some considered legal action (ultimately not forthcoming) to have the results of the meeting overturned. The question left hanging was, in Faguy's words: "Who controls the *Link* now? Nobody knows."[265] The Dean of Students subsequently froze the paper's operations for the summer (with the annual Summer issue a casualty), and late summer saw an agreement reached by which the new additions to the Board of Directors were retained – and the paper resumed operations without the kinds of major reforms (e.g significantly lowered threshold for 'staff' status) that had initially been requested by some. The new BoD members,[266] and the ongoing legacy of the conflict, did spark some "internal conflict, but not as much as you might expect"[267] according to Faguy, who stayed with the paper for several more years (where he was reportedly "a thorn in the side"[268] of CSU administrations on any range of the political spectrum). Troster, and much of the rest of the 2000-2001 editorial board, however, "completely walked away."[269]

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[264] Telephone interview, March 2010.
[265] Personal interview, February 2010.
[266] Some of who eventually surrendered positions due to non-attendance at required meetings.
[267] Ibid.
[268] Confidential source. Telephone interview, March 2010.
[269] Troster, Ariel. Telephone interview, March 2010.

Troster recalls the issue of editorial autonomy as taking up "100% of our time," and fostering an "absolute siege mentality." As she puts it,

> It sounds like regular student politics, but it was really quite devastating to those of us who were there at the newspaper at the time because we all thought of ourselves as activists, but we also thought of ourselves as journalists, and we wanted to hold these people accountable for embezzling a truly massive sum of money, but in doing so, you know, they turned a critical eye to our coverage and made all kinds of accusations about our editorial bias, it was just a huge fight that lasted a couple of years.

The struggle once again highlights the recurrent tension between more 'professional' journalistic orientations (e.g. those which empasize the ideal detachment of 'regimes of objectivity') and 'activism.' Again quoting Troster (and recalling the framing employed in the *Link*'s own efforts at self-defense, cited above), it is clear that the simultaneous acknowledgment and seeming disavowal of subjectivity – as the editorial board took pains to acknowledge that their work was not 'objective,' but seemed to assert that the judgments they actually made simply reflected the salient details (and spoke to the truth, the public good, and what students really need to know) related to the events concerned:

> [It is] a really important thing for journalists to be responsible to communities [...] Even though I kept saying that I didn't believe in journalistic objectivity, and that everybody was really subjective, I'm not sure that I, or that we, really took that to heart [...] So when we were challenged on our own biases, our instinct was to be 'But we're journalists! We're exposing the truth!' instead of thinking about the words that we were using, and the message that we were sending, and why people might have been so upset by our actions.[270]

While the effects of the episode on the paper's later instantiations (other than the departure of much of the editorial staff) are not entirely clear, as it would be fair to suggest – as does Cuppage – that the long-term impacts are likely minimal given the relative absence of institutional memory and high turnover even in normal operations,[271] one editor did imply that subsequent editorial decisions were impacted. The way the issue is presented suggests, again, a strong attachment to ideals of 'objectivity' or 'balance' and

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[270] Ibid.
[271] Telephone interview, February 2010.

journalistic autonomy not only from the institutions over which they may stand as 'watchdog,' but also from the explicit activism of social movement constituents (in this case, a situation exacerbated by the fact that 'activists' – 'radicals,' even – were at that time occupying the halls of power in student government):

> I think it kind of forced people at the *Link* to let activists write stories [...] to let them dictate a little bit what we did, because of some of the accusations they'd made about racism. I remember agreeing to a lot of activists writing about their own issue, and I felt like that wasn't particularly ethical, because they weren't objective, but their whole thing around the petition was that we weren't allowed to dictate how issues were covered [...] I think the year after the petition we were all kind of scared of the activists and allowed them to dictate things that [we wouldn't have otherwise].[272]

At this high point of tension between more 'professional' journalistic ideals and commitments to activism (and actual activists), the petition and subsequent developments engendered a rupture between the two, and some on the *Link* staff were prompted to stake out – on the particular issues at hand, at least – a position as journalists, distinguishing themselves strictly from those who mounted a sustained critique of the paper's coverage of SPHR and the CSU, and of their internal operations. In the end, for some, it was a simple question of asserting an identity as journalists first. As the same editor cited above (who also recounted an anti-Zionist activist's surprise, at the end of the year of the crisis, on learning that the editor largely agreed with his pro-Palestinian position) described the problem:

> That's what the activists never understood. We couldn't be them. We couldn't be like, because I'm pro-Palestinian, this article is going to be completely slanted...we had to keep out thoughts to ourselves, we had to keep our views to ourselves to a certain extent. And that's why they would get angry with us, because they wanted us to be like them.[273]

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[272] Confidential source. Personal interview, February 2010.
[273] Ibid.

## Conclusions

Following up on the first section's discussion of how standards such as 'fairness' or 'balance' (and some of the more specific provisions in the *Link* and *Daily*'s guiding documents, or those of CUP, to which the papers' respective constitutions appeal) may be articulated as alternatives to 'objectivity,' and of the inclination of both the guiding documents and individual student journalists to assert a political mission for the papers (often highly critical of standards associated with 'regimes of objectivity'), the two cases just elaborated make clear that student journalists do frequently see themselves as deploying 'activist' orientations in their work – and that such a general orientation is marked out, at times, in contradistinction to a more 'professional' orientation. Even those who see themselves as taking up such an 'activist' orientation, as "giving [...] a boost" to those involved in struggles for social justice, however, as the case of the crisis at the *Link* illustrates, may – just as do many professionals – retreat to a position where journalism is in effect its own justification, and journalists 'simply doing their jobs.'

In this case, the editors of a paper whose staff self-consciously considered themselves (according to Jane Shulman, ougoing editor that spring) "agents of social change", and who (according to Troster) sought to "give a boost" to activist groups on campus took positions which put them into direct conflict with 'activist' groups (including the 'radical' student union) who didn't appreciate their portrayal in the pages of the paper or the way the publication operates – and a retreat to the status of 'journalist' (more closely aligned with 'professional' orientations, as 'watchdog' working in the public service, as avatars of an inviolable 'free press,' as 'balanced' or 'fair'), for better or for worse, was their response. Ultimately, while the paper may have presented itself as (and many staff have genuinely identified with) an 'activist paper,' certain standards – drawn from the wider field of journalism – could not be transgressed, and certain ideals needed to be maintained. The

autonomy of the paper and its editors were not up for negotiation (nor the requirements for 'staff' status, a major component of that autonomy), and – despite the fact that the line is much less distinct at a student paper such as the *Link* than in professional contexts – the apparent 'conflict of interest' in the Charbonneau case (though perhaps reflective of larger conflicts) prompted decisive action. Indeed, the first in the string of events which contributed to the crisis was also related to the coverage of protest – though, in this case, by Troster, who ended up in the same position (in light of factual errors, miscues and some questionable writing) as some 'mainstream' journalists criticized for presentation which casts activists in a bad light.

The case of the *Daily*'s "cycles of politicization" emphasizes that the general orientations predominant at a given paper may change significantly in a short period of time, and that elements of both 'activist' and 'professional' orientations combine in different ways. Even though the more 'professional' instantiations of the paper may have been subsequently perceived as less welcoming to activism (one former editor ca. 2005 referred to the period as "one of the nadirs of leftism at the Daily"[274]), the reasons cited for their commitment to more 'professional' standards further reveal the difficulty of negotiating the tensions inherent in seeking to operate a politically engaged press (in that, for all of the value of such engagement, it is necessary to consider not only problems with the 'mainstream,' but also the receptivity of readers to one's 'alternative' content). This concern appears to have been at the heart of subsequent efforts as the the *Daily* sought to be a more politicized paper towards the mid-2000s, as editors sought to employ diverse content to keep issues such as the 2005 student strike on the pages of the paper (and therefore, presumably, on readers' agenda), but insisted on a need to consider various sides of this contentious issue and offer a 'public forum' to opposing viewpoints even as they sought to use the paper's editorial

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[274] Confidential source. Telephone interview, January 2010.

voice (and discretion in production) to advocate for a strike. Being 'fair' in coverage and keeping to the Statement of Principles[275] (or the *Link*'s Mandate) are clearly standards that bear some interpretation – indeed, offer a great deal of freedom – and it is precisely this freedom which opens up an undecided space in which the negotiation of tensions between more 'professional' and more 'activist' orientations play out. Both the ways in which the *Link* and *Daily* may act as alternative(s) to the mainstream, and the ways in which these tensions are negotiatated are further pursued in the following chapter, examining the *Link* and *Daily*'s coverage of selected protest events associated with anti-globalization and anti-police brutality movements.

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[275] *Though in reference to the latter, it is interesting to note that the Daily, in the early part of the decade, at times summarized the Statement of Principles by simply citing its invocation to present stories not covered by the mainstream press (perhaps, or perhaps not, omitting the commitment to analyze and challenge power relations deliberately). See, for example:*
    "Facts and Fiction Re: The Daily's Convictions." *McGill Daily,* 05/9/2001: 8.

# Chapter 6

## Protest event coverage in the Link and McGill Daily: anti-globalization and anti-police brutality

*"Forty-seven arrested in police brutality demonstration," the headline said. I was struck by the fact that I'd never been on that side of the news before – a little part of me actually felt hurt for just being represented by a number. But I guess there are no small parts.*

> - D. van der Linde, 'The other side of the headline,' The *Link*, 2008

### Introduction

Having dealt thus far with how the *Link* and the *Daily* have represented their own respective histories, often in association with social movements, activism and protest (though not without some ambivalence), how student journalists have positioned themselves vis-à-vis mainstream media (as aligned with professionals and academics in defending 'journalism' against the negative impacts of the 'news industry,' as critics of mainstream coverage, defending student activists engaged in publice protest, and as 'good journalists' chiding mainstream outlets with respect to their failures in adequately pursuing 'real issues' and the problems of 'shallow' objectivity or balance), and how student journalists' normative orientations are variously articulated and negotiated (and how they may play out in practice, in situations of conflict or shifting over time), I now turn specifically to coverage of social movements and particular protest events. In doing so, I seek both to articulate how the *Link* and *Daily*'s treatments of such events may be seen as 'alternative' (as different from the mainstream, as inclined to engage sympathetically with protesters' rationale for action, and to pursue the question of police violence and the criminalization of dissent) and to carry forward the critical reading of tensions between 'professional' and 'activist' orientations in this context.

In this chapter, I highlight The *Link* and *McGill Daily*'s coverage of anti-globalization and anti-police brutality movements and protest. Drawing on the content of the two newpapers over the course of the period of reference, I contend that while treatments of specific protest events and movements in general are not uncritically aligned with activists, on balance content related to these examples is emblematic of an 'alternative' orientation instantiated through practices of sourcing, presentation (including furnishing 'mobilizing information), framing and thematic issue-linkage. The *Link* and *Daily* (at times) present different or more multidimensional (and more sympathetic) coverage of contentious protest events related to these movements, employ a variety of forms of content within their pages in doing so, and have at times exceeded and challenged mainstream accounts of these contentious events by presenting supplementary information and counter-narratives which reframe and better contextualize the protest.

In presenting the relevant content, I emphasize the ways in which these differences can be illustrated, employing a critical reading of the texts supplemented by a few simple quantitative measures (which present some comparison vis-à-vis the *Gazette*). As further supplement, I draw on interview material concerning student journalists' accounts of experience covering protests (in the latter case, with particular reference to the anti-FTAA demonstrations in Quebec City). In short, I seek to portray how these examples of protest events were covered (in contrast to mainstream sources, and with reference to problems with mainstream protest coverage highlighted in the academic literature), draw on accounts from interviews and newspaper content which shed additional light on such coverage (including tensions between professional and activist roles), and survey the ways in which issues raised in the context of these particular protest events have informed (or echoed concerns already present in) content beyond the immediate scope of these events.

*An exploratory study: some quantitative comparisons of student vs. mainstream media coverage of selected anti-globalization and anti-police brutality protest events*

In somewhat of a departure from this thesis' otherwise qualitative focus, I turn here to a simple quantitative analysis (based on qualitative content analysis of coverage of selected protest events associated with anti-globalization and anti-police brutality movements) which provides another angle from which to examine the question of how the *Link* and *McGill Daily* might be described as 'alternative media,' and how political commitments and normative orientations to journalistic practice might manifest in news content. This exploratory study, conducted in late 2009, seeks to analyze the coverage of social protest in two different types of print media: the 'mainstream' Montreal *Gazette*, and student newspapers (the *Link* and *Daily*). The primary aim of this quantitative investigation is to describe and assess possible differences in a number of indicators (particularly sourcing, SMO mentions,[276] valence, and story prominence) between news stories covering local 'protest events' published in each media type. Methodology and results are presented here in truncated form; for details concerning the definition of variables and other aspects of methodology, and for selected additional tables from the original analysis, see Appendix 3.[277] The results presented here serve as a segue into discussion which more closely mirrors the approach in previous chapters; it is my hope that the more concrete measures described provide a useful supplement to a closer critical reading of the respective papers' coverage of these same events through the themes which continue to guide my analysis towards its conclusion, which follows this chapter.

The final sample for the analysis consisted of 121 articles covering selected protest events in Montreal and Quebec City, specifically centered on anti-globalization and anti-police brutality demonstrations (2000-2009). I focused solely on articles in 'news' formats,

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[276] That is, discrete mention of particular Social Movement Organizations.
[277] For more complete analysis, including the Link and Daily's on-campus competition at the Concordian and McGill Tribune, see Mowbray (2009), available from the author upon request.

excluding editorials, columnists, letters, etc. Those selected represent all such articles printed within 7 days prior and 14 days following the selected protest events. In total, these criteria yielded 73 *Gazette* articles, collected through the ProQuest Canadian Newsstand database, and 48 from the *Link* (26) and the *McGill Daily* (22).

Key variables are as follows:

**sourcing variables:** Jha (2007) identifies 'sourcing' as a potentially significant indicator of how media coverage depicts protest events. Based on her work, I have chosen to count the number of 'protester sources' (those participating in or presenting a sympathetic view of protest) and 'pro-institutional sources' (government, police, and those presenting an unsympathetic view of protest) in each article as key variables in my analysis. Following Jha (with some modification), I further subdivide each category in terms of the relative authority of sources cited (official, authoritative, and unauthoritative sources).[278]

**SMO mentions:** I follow Almeida and Lichbach (2003) in counting mentions of Social Movement Organizations associated with protest events, as an indicator of the richness of information included in coverage.

**Story valence:** Again following Jha, the variable 'valence' indicates whether coverage in a given article is judged 'positive', 'negative', or 'neutral/ambivalent'.

**Story prominence index:** an index of relative story prominence in the publication, based on a computation of discrete variables measuring 'story length', 'story placement', and the presence of accompanying photographs. A 1500+ word story on the front page with multiple photos would represent the maximum value; one <349 words, outside of the main 'news' section, with no photos would represent the minimum

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[278] These latter, as with all variables listed here, are presented in more detail in Appendix 3.

My hypothesis, loosely speaking, was that student newspapers would present a different (and more sympathetic) view of 'protest events' than the 'mainstream' *Gazette* – and that this would be indicated in sourcing practices (more protester and fewer pro-institutional sources), SMO mentions (more mentions), story prominence (more prominent stories), and valence (more positive stories). Results tended to confirm this view, though some – notably an insignificant difference in the number of 'protester sources' cited between the *Gazette* and the student papers (though the *Gazette* was more likely to cite 'official protester' sources, indicating, as Tuchman (1978: 91-93) notes, a tendency to prefer spokespersons and leaders) – were unexpected. The most basic measures describing sourcing and SMO mentions, presented in Figure 2, indicate a relatively small difference in the mean number of protester sources across media types (though still somewhat higher in student media. Pro-institutional sources, however, are represented more than twice as often (with 2.59 times more citations)[279] in the *Gazette*, and student media mentions specific Social Movement Organizations almost exactly twice as often (2.01 times more citations) in news coverage of the same selection of protest events. Similarly, in an independent samples T-test (variance of means), the number of 'protester' sources varied only slightly between 'mainstream' and 'student' samples, and this difference was not statistically significant; however, the number of 'pro-institutional' sources yielded a mean difference of 1.033 at .000 significance (more in 'mainstream'), and SMO mentions one of -.866, though at only .028 significance (more in 'student,' though a larger sample would be needed to confirm this at a higher statistical significance).

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[279] Thus, protester sources are much more strongly represented relative to pro-institutional sources in the student newspapers.

**FIGURE 2: group statistics presenting mean no. of sources and SMO mentions**

Group Statistics

|  | media type | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Protester sources | mainstream | 73 | 2.73 | 2.388 | .279 |
|  | student | 48 | 2.90 | 2.086 | .301 |
| pro-institutional sources | mainstream | 73 | 1.66 | 1.511 | .177 |
|  | student | 48 | .63 | .866 | .125 |
| SMO mentions | mainstream | 73 | .86 | 1.388 | .162 |
|  | student | 48 | 1.73 | 1.842 | .266 |

Examining sourcing variables divided by level of authority required more sophisticated measures, and proved relatively less conclusive – though two notable results emerged. Running the ANOVA variance of means test for all source types divided by level of authority, only the number of 'official pro-institutional' sources proved highly significant, with an F-value of 15.487 at the .000 level of significance. The *Gazette* cited a great deal more 'official pro-institutional sources'. 'Official pro-institutional sources' (police spokespersons, municipal officials, provincial and federal government leaders and their representatives) tend to be employed as one side of a two-sided presentation of 'balance' in protest-related stories (where these sources often emphasize the disorderly behaviour of, or seek to deny or reframe general claims made by, protesters) and are much less likely to be cited in the student press (probably out of a combination of lack of access to 'official' sources and a commitment to present stories which differ from those of the mainstream and provide relative emphasis to voices underrepresented elsewhere). This seems to represent a greater inclination of the student press to present protester sources without 'balancing' their views

with others that contradict or seek to de-legitimate their actions and concerns. Notably, there were still significantly more 'protester' than 'pro-institutional' sources cited within the sample of *Gazette* coverage (2.73 vs. 1.66 per story), emphasizing that a tendency to cite more protester sources is not in itself a strong source of differentiation; however, given that *Gazette* articles often tend to cite 'official' sources at some length (returning to the same source more than once in an article), and that sources were counted here as discrete persons/groups cited (eliding emphasis), it remains for future research to pursue in more depth the question of what proportion of cited information or comment comes from what types of source.

The 'valence' component of this exploratory study is admittedly no strictly empirical measure; while all constructed measures of the type employed here depend upon the researcher's judgment to some extent, I wish to emphasize that this one in particular should not be taken as more than a general indicator (particularly given that I was solely responsible for coding, meaning that intersubjective coding reliability, which is typically weak on such measures, is unverified). The main criteria employed sought to evaluate whether individual stories focused primarily on information and sources which were critical of protesters or focused on disorder and violence (at the expense of protester viewpoints or concerns, especially regarding the actual subject of contention), or whether they focused primarily on protester voices and messages (emphasizing the reasons for protest and the concerns of protesters, including those regarding police actions against those demonstrating). Thus, the measure primarily seeks to evaluate the selection of content by journalists covering the events (though considerations of tone, etc, inevitably come into play). Stories deemed not to display sufficient emphasis on either of the above were coded as 'ambivalent/neutral.' Keeping in mind that I examined only 'news'-type stories, it is important to note that 'positive' valence indicates not so much an explicit

endorsement (nor 'negative' valence an explicit condemnation), but rather an evaluation of the relative emphasis inferred from the information selected for inclusion.[280] Ultimately, as indicated in Figure 2, the *Gazette* took, by these criteria, a 'balanced' approach (19 stories coded 'negative,' 31 'neutral/ambivalent' and 23 'positive'), whereas the student media stories examined were much more likely to be coded as 'positive' (1 story coded as 'negative,' 8 as 'neutral/ambivalent' and 39 'positive').

**Figure 3: Results of coding for 'valence' by media type**

## Bar Chart



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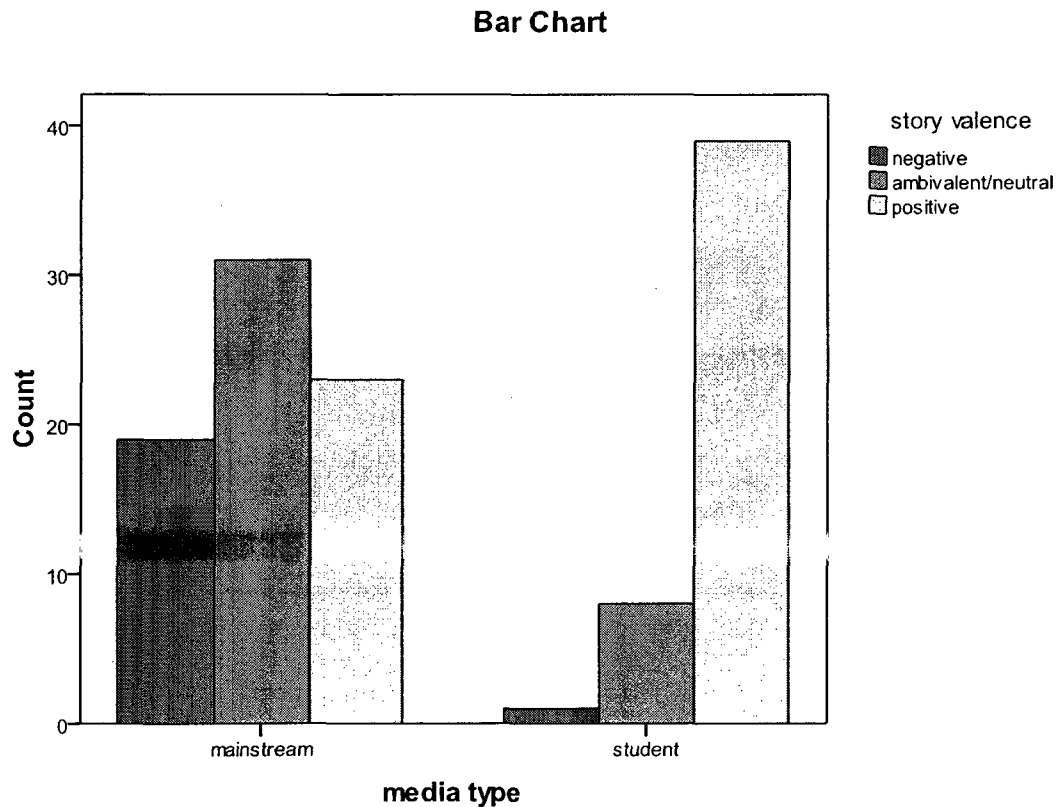
[280] In effect, this is a relatively 'shallow,' though hopefully illustrative, measure; 'positive' coding indicates mainly that stories actually presented arguments, quotations or general concerns presented by protest participants (either solely, or with relatively more emphasis than those opposing the protest), not that their presentation necessarily addresses protester concerns in any depth or presents them, as it were, 'in best light' (though, of course, stories which did so would indeed be coded as having a 'positive' valence).

The results of the analysis clearly indicate a number of substantive differences in how student newspapers covered the selected protest events relative to the *Gazette*. Perhaps most notable are the differences in "pro-institutional" sourcing (especially the markedly higher number of 'official pro-institutional sources' in the *Gazette*), the significantly higher number of SMO mentions in the student newspapers, and the clear tendency of the student papers (especially the *Link* and *Daily*) to present stories with a more positive valence; the moderate differences in story prominence seem to indicate that the selected protest events represented a higher relative priority for the student papers, but the difference on this count is not so significant as to merit further comment.[281] The differences in sourcing, in particular, point to a variation which likely correlates with both a tendency of student journalists to seek out sources other than those 'primary definers' often favoured by mainstream media – a clear application of a mandate to present 'marginalized' voices – and more limited access to (and resources to seek out) sources such as police and municipal officials.[282] The strong (if not necessarily highly reliable) differences in terms of valence almost certainly connect with these same tendencies; still, relative emphasis in journalists' own descriptions on protester violence or property damage, and on the responses of authorities, appeared noticeably more present in the Gazette.

As noted, this particular effort (as an exploratory study) is intended more to orient and supplement the following critical reading and presentation of the ways in which selected anti-globalization and anti-police brutality protest events were covered by the *Link* and *Daily*; as such, it does give some clear empirical basis for considering student coverage of these events as 'alternative.' Concretely, the differences in sourcing and SMO mentions

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[281] Those interested may see Appendix 3 for details.

[282] Many of the citations of 'official pro-institutional' sources in the Link and Daily appear to be (and many are credited as being) second-hand statements cited from mainstream media sources, though there are cases in which student journalists obtained comment directly from officials.

indicate a tendency to present (even to privilege) protester voices over 'pro-institutional' sources and to present information (e.g. noting organizations involved with movements) which better contextualizes events and offers an opportunity to readers to further inform themselves about protester's concerns. The differences in 'valence,' while presenting only a rough indicator, emphasize a tendency of student protest coverage of these events to refrain from presenting information predominantly focused on protester violence or the opposing views and criticism of 'pro-institutional' sources,[283] and to thus position themselves – on the aggregate, looking at all 'news'-type stories examined – in a way which is decidedly different from the 'mainstream' *Gazette*, and which appears more sympathetic to those movements, groups and individuals who take to the streets.

### *Coverage of anti-globalization protest: run-up to Quebec City 2001*

Given the period of reference for this thesis, the so-called 'anti-globalization' movement, epitomized in a series of protest events targeting the meetings of transnational financial organizations and international summits such as those associated with the World Bank/International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Trade Organization (WTO), G8/G20, and institutional actors seeking to consolidatie international trade agreements such as the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), provides a connecting thread between a number of high-profile and contentious protest events in Quebec and internationally. Although – when considered primarily on the basis of such 'counter-summit' demonstrations, at least – the movement's Canadian and Quebec roots[284] stretch back to demonstrations targeting the

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[283] Indicating that student journalists, in this instance, can hardly be accused of privileging 'primary definers' (Hall et al 1978) or presenting protesters collectively as violence-prone 'folk devils' (Cohen 2002), though my reading of the Gazette coverage as part of this study certainly indicated some instances which would appear to qualify there.

[284] More broadly, it is notable that anti-free trade movements gained traction in English Canada from the mid-1980s, though concerns and movement configurations at that time are not always consonant with some viewpoints associated with later movements against corporate globalization; it has been

1995 G7 meetings in Halifax, the 1997 APEC meetings in Vancouver, and efforts to combat the proposed Multilateral Agreement on Investment in the late 1990s (MAI), efforts specifically targeting the FTAA marked an upsurge in visible movement activity in Quebec (Gaudet and Sarrasin 2008; Lamoureux 2008; Dupuis-Deri 2007b).

The April 2001 protests against the FTAA-centred Summit of the Americas were a high-point, attracting approximately 40,000 demonstrators and placing the city's name along a trajectory of such counter-summit protests, following prominent internationally-coordinated actions at the 1999 Seattle WTO ministerial (as well as those which preceded it in Geneva and London, though without the same media fanfare) and in Prague in 2000, and continuing through Miami, Genoa, Gleneagles and elsewhere – including G8/G20 protests in Toronto in May 2010 (Chesters and Welsh 2004; Drainville 2005). However, as elsewhere, such high-points (at which a significant number of activists converged from across Canada and around the world) occur in a social and geographic context where many smaller protest actions arise from the local activist networks and collectives which are essential to the organization of such large coordinated events (and attendant media spectacles).

The movements which percolated around the 2001 Summit and other key events at the beginning of the decade remain strong – through a variety of permutations along the way, though many key issues are the same; however, the particular prominence of 'anti-globalization' protest in the early part of the decade, the amount of space taken up by the subject in the *Link* and *Daily* at the time, and the opportunity to speak with a number of student journalists involved in coverage of the 2001 Summit of the Americas in Quebec City have prompted me to focus primarily on this period. Beyond this focus on protest event coverage (and on the early 2000s), I indicate some later examples of related protest event

suggested that (francophone) Quebec boasted virtually no similar social movement predecessor opposed to free trade until the mid 1990s (Duchastel 2003; Conway and Dufour 2010).

coverage, how such coverage is handled at the *Link* and the *Daily*, and some of the directions

and issues taken up in the respective papers which can be connected with my second case.

The 'G20 Welcoming Party,' a protest event targeting G20 meetings at the Sheraton

Hotel in Montreal the week of October 23rd, 2000, is the first notable local 'anti-

globalization' demonstration to grace the pages of the two student newspapers.[285] The

*Daily*'s coverage is noticeably student-centred. One piece in advance of the event details the

formation of on-campus activist umbrella group FTAA-Alert McGill in the run-up to the

Summit, uniting, in addition to its own individual members, groups including NDP-McGill,

the Women's Union and International Socialists with the declared intention of taking

advantage of "a unique opportunity [...] to respond in a united front" in the face of an

agreement which "attacks [...] areas of the public interest" including "quality education,

labour, health care, the environment, women's rights and color issues."[286] Issues around the

possible effects of neoliberal trade regulations (by which commercialized services cannot

be nationalized, and public policy can be struck down as 'barriers to trade'), in the words of

the writer, had sparked concerns among some McGill students that the FTAA "may leave

Canada powerless to combat skyrocketing tuition fees, privatization of fresh water and the

outlawing of Medicare." The benefactors, according to a student involved with FTAA-Alert,

would be "[c]orporations, bosses and the filthy rich." As well as emphasizing the role of

students ("instrumental in mounting opposition campaigns against free trade agreements

over the past 15 years"), the piece – following spokespeople for the group – notes the

"educational" role of social movement activity, and the group's aim to allow members to "be

as moderate or as radical as they want to be."

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[285] Though a 'day of action' in solidarity with the Prague demonstrations against the IMF and WTO was previewed in the Link on September 26, 2000 (the day of the action), it was not subsequently covered in the paper.
[286] Dempsey, Rachel. "Students Unite Against Free Trade." *McGill Daily*, 19/10/2000: 4.

A preview of the meetings and protest by *Daily* editor John Bricker takes a classically 'balanced' approach by interviewing then-federal finance minister Paul Martin's spokesperson ("Economies are more open than ever before, like it or not, that's the reality") in juxtaposition with activist Jaggi Singh ("one of Canada's best known anti-globalization activists,"[287] who called the G20 meetings "a PR exercise to make the G7 look good, to make it look like the G7 wants to hear from less-developed countries") and Canadian Federation of Students-Quebec's Phil Ilijevski, who accused Martin of being "afraid of students" and cancelling a speaking event at Concordia the week prior to avoid bad press.[288]

The latter (non-)event and the anti-corporate demonstration which went ahead in his absence (featuring a student wearing a "giant paper-mache Paul Martin head" answering questions on the absent minister's behalf, as well as a mock prison calling attention to student debt)[289] was covered by the *Link* alongside "The People's G-20," an event organized by activists associated with the Halifax Initiative (formed to respond to G7 meetings in that city in 1995) which sought, in the words of coalition coordinator Pamela Foster, to "try to introduce issues of finance into the environment debate, into the labour debate, into the development and social justice debate."[290] As the article summarizes, "[a]t the core of the discussions was the idea that the world financial organization, embodied by the G20, had proved incapable of reformation. It was time for radical transformation."

A sidebar describing that Monday's protest tells a story (already familiar from Seattle, though much smaller in scale) of street theatre followed by skirmishes between police and

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[287] Alternately described as "one of Montreal's best-known anti-globalization activists" ten days later in the same paper, Singh is a prominent figure in the Convergence des luttes anticapitaliste/Anti-capitalist Convergence (CLAC), an umbrella group for radical-left/anticapitalist resistance who organized the prominent 'Carnival Against Capitalism' at the Quebec City Summit and officially embraced 'diversity of tactics,' refusing to condemn those who chose to confront police or damage property in the course of protest action, in the belief that it is not appropriate to pass judgment on the tactics and modes of resistance employed by others, and that 'violence' is not always unjustified (see Conway 2003).
[288] Bricker, John. "Montreal Plays Host to G-20 Summit." *McGill Daily*, 23/10/2000: 3.
[289] Biberstein, Rene. "Paul Martin: no show." *The Link*, 24/10/2000: 4.
[290] Valla, Marie. "The People's G-20." *The Link*, 24/10/2000: 4.

protesters, leading to 39 arrests; the sidebar, however, ends with a quote from a student demonstrator insisting (as the author puts it in the lead-in to the quote) that "the day's violence was nothing compared to the systemic violence in developing countries due to G-20 decisions."[291]

The main protest event itself was a cover story for both the *Link*[292] and the *Daily*, with the former printing three news articles and an editorial and the latter a two-page feature. The two covers are strikingly similar full-cover photos, each depicting police in riot gear, including helmets with Plexiglas face-shields, occupying most of the right side of the page and facing down protesters (three individuals sitting on the road at the feet of officers in the case of the *Link*, and one individual inches away from the face of officers in the *Daily*'s). *Link* coverage included a resume of the past Monday's protests, at which over 1000 demonstrated in front of the Sheraton, drawing on Bricker's earlier *Daily* article and citing a Council of Canadians representative's hopes that "the focus doesn't shift from the message to the pandemonium"; the *Link* also covered the aftermath of arrests,[293] including the targeting of Singh who was arrested for violating bail conditions (by virtue of his presence at a protest) and allegedly inciting a riot with a political speech. Coverage is rounded out with a news profile of 87-year old Mildred Ryerson, an Order of Canada-decorated activist and union advocate whose first protest was in support of Sacco and Vanzetti.[294]

The *Link* was not alone in taking up this latter story, which both appeals to 'human interest' and novelty as news values and furnishes an easily narrativized historical context and personalized portrait; as the article notes, "[Ryerson] soon became a sort of media icon for photographers and journalists who tried to get a quote or a shot of the dean of

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[291] Savoie, Pierre-Olivier. Untitled. *The Link*, 24/10/2000: 4.
[292] On October 31st, as only the short sidebar mentioned appears to have been available for production night on the day of the protest, Monday, 23 October, 2000.
[293] Scalia, Robert. "Three G-20 protesters still behind bars." *The Link*, 31/10/2000: 3. The same article was reprinted, with some revision, by the Daily on November 2nd.
[294] Savoie, Pierre-Olivier. "Veteran activist on the front line." *The Link*, 31/10/2000.

protesters." For its part, the *Link* notes that she "doesn't seem to fear the police," and quotes her assertion that "it's a good thing" that people stand up to have their voices heard at public demonstrations like that targeting the G20 meetings. As the piece continues:

> The only one worrying seemed to be a riot squad officer who continuously looked at her, somewhat troubled, as officers advanced mechanically on protesters.
> "Someone take care of the old lady," he muttered half audibly, making sure his co-workers didn't notice his caring plea.

Ryerson is quoted immediately afterwards, reinforcing the view of police response as problematic, intimidating, and unwarranted:

> "It's a terrible thing [to have such repression like today]. They're walking like machines. It's a horrible sight. We fight for democracies in other countries and not even here," she said.
> [...]
> "Today, it's the same feeling of death as with Franco's troops. It's coming at you because it seems [the policeman] can't stop."

The *Link*'s editorial in the same issue clearly contends that police violence was "unjustly extreme", describing "scenes," after a few protesters hurled projectiles, "in which mounted police pepper-sprayed, beat, trampled and chased protesters and media members as far east as Chinatown."[295] Condemning the fact that three were denied bail (by a judge citing international confidence in the Canadian justice system and the fact that police are "guardians of democracy" rather than the typical concern for likelihood of reoffending or failing to appear) and that Singh's arrest was justified by police not on the basis of his speech's content, but rather its "tone,"[296] the editorial concludes: "With all of the intimidation, secrecy, and unilateral decisions being made, the "guardians of democracy" may find themselves with little left to guard."

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[295] "Undermining democracy: Police response to G-20 protest undermines freedom of speech."
    Editorial. *The Link*, 31/10/2001: 15.
[296] As the editorial continues:
"Like him or not, Singh is a popular orator; but tone of speech is not incitement, and cheers and applause is not a riot. He is now in a state that might be described as democratic limbo; out of jail, but banned from participating in any future protests before trial, lest his tone become unruly again."

The *Daily* feature covering the event alternates between coverage of the protest in front of the Sheraton, again presenting contention over whether police violence was justified by citing both a police spokesperson and a McGill undergraduate ("one of the non-violent protesters arrested Monday while sitting down") who described their actions as "imposing" and "unnecessary," and of an earlier "Anti-G20 Speak-out rally" on-campus, where the writer spoke to student participants about their concerns (emphasizing a focus on wealth redistribution and opposition to the subordination of social, human rights and environmental concerns to profit) – finally connecting the two locations via description of the march from that event to the Sheraton. With regard to the question of police violence, two quotations chosen as 'pull-quotes' (or 'extracted quotes,' selections set apart in larger type to draw reader attention and add emphasis)[297] seem to draw out a theme from longer accounts from the police spokesperson and the arrested student, respectively:

> "Even if you didn't throw anything, you are still a part of it."
> "A guy was smashed on the head by a policeman on horseback. I didn't see him throwing anything or acting violent. He was just there."

Security and policing issues had become a focus with regard to the larger movement in advance even of this particular G20 event with a *Link* article, reprinted in the *Daily* in mid-October,[298] that previews the security measures (focusing on opposition) and speculation regarding protest-associated violence implicit in those measures, and explicit (if understated) in CSIS documents on the movement which indicated that "the threat of Summit-associated violence in Quebec cannot be ruled out." RCMP are cited maintaining that extensive barriers[299] surrounding much of the Old City (and the presence of 3,000 RCMP, Sureté du Quebec and municipal police) are "for the security of the participants, as well as the citizens and demonstrators in the area," alongside Jaggi Singh's suggestion that

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[297] See Gibson et al (2001); their study suggests that 'pull quotes' have a significant impact on reader perceptions of news stories.
[298] Huncar, Andrea. "Quebec City Under Siege." *McGill Daily*, 16/10/2000: 4.
[299] Ultimately, a 10-foot, 3.5 km perimeter fence (Drainville 2005).

the measures constituted "an undeclared War Measures Act."[300] Further citing activists'

suggestions that the measures are aimed primarily at marginalizing and controlling

demonstrations, the author notes that while the RCMP spokesperson insists that police

"have no intention of minimizing what they want to vocalize," she (in the authors words)

"could not confirm whether that would be inside or outside the perimeter."

Coverage of anti-globalization issues in the run-up to the April 2001 Summit of the

Americas protest was significantly more prominent and persistent in the *Link* than the *Daily*

– perhaps reflecting the more 'professional' orientation of key editors at the latter paper in

that period (as discussed in Chapter 5). An "FTAA Watch" logo marked pieces in the *Link*

which pursued the theme from the Fall of 2000 until the end of the paper's publishing cycle

in early April 2001; the *Link* thus highlighted a range of background pieces on

environmental and human-rights issues and provided a forum for a diversity of activist

groups – including those who sought to transpose discussion of activist violence to that of

systemic violence and state intimidation aimed at protesters[301] and alternative media

proponents (such as those who set up the Centre des Médias Alternatifs, the first

instantiation of the online Independent Media Centre movement to appear in Quebec) who

sought explicitly to "challenge the attitude expressed in the maxim that a free press is only

such for those who own it."[302]

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[300] The comparison with the Trudeau government's 1970 imposition, in the face of the kidnappings of James Cross and Pierre Laporte by cells associated with Quebec sovereignist group la Front de Liberation du Quebec (FLQ), of legislative measures which grant police extraordinary powers to arrest, search and detain those considered a threat to political order is particularly Quebec-appropriate – though the framing of 2010 G20 security measures (particularly the Ontario government's secretly-passed legislation granting Toronto police additional powers within 5 metres of the security fence) have elicited the same comparison from groups including the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and a re-constituted CLAC. See:
http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/article/828367--g20-law-gives-police-sweeping-
    powers-to-arrest-people;
http://www.montrealgazette.com/news/protesters+regroup+Montreal/3223971/story.html
[301] E.g. D'Alto, Vincenzo. "Activists try to shift focus of debate." *The Link*, 03/4/2001: 4.
[302] Nitsiou, Alex. "Alternative media centre attacks globalization." *The Link*, 24/10/2000: 21.

The regular "FTAA Watch" pieces typically appeared in the news section (and took the form of news or news analysis), and regularly included such "mobilizing information" (i.e. information that allows readers to easily seek further information or become directly involved in movement activities; see Nicodemus 2004) as the names of activist groups, alternative publications, web addresses and contact information – an important distinction from 'mainstream' coverage which does this only very rarely. Some also took up more thematic (in Iyengar's (1991) sense) and policy-oriented positions, suggesting, for example, that a "common market," as exists in the EU (where mechanisms are present to redistribute wealth to less prosperous states and to enforce standards on labour, social policies and the environment) might offer a positive alternative to the FTAA.[303]

The last issue of Spring 2001 (on April 10th) was "the *Link*'s first Globalization special issue," and *Link* participation in a bilingual joint publication organized by la Presse Universitaire Independante du Quebec (PUIQ) was very strong (with six *Link* staff contributing seven articles, four in French and three in English, one acting as "*chef de pupitre – interieure,*'[304] and others collaborating in production or providing photos). That project, which regrouped student journalists from French-language papers at UQAM, Laval and the Universities of Ottawa, Sherbrooke, and Montreal alongside the *Link* and the *Daily*, produced a single issue on April 24th, 2001 that detailed the impressions and experiences of student journalists inside and outside the security perimeter.

The *Journal de la PUIQ* was a unique effort, and 32,000 copies were distributed on the campuses of participating papers, appearing in the regular distribution boxes at McGill and

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[303] Savoie, Pierre-Olivier. "Bush declared war on earth: Barlow." *The Link*, 03/4/2001: 5; Haraoui, Muriel. "Common market fairer than free trade." *The Link*, 10/4/2001: 7.
[304] That is, as Bureau Chief for those inside the perimeter – student journalists able to gain accreditation to cover the Summit from inside the fence.

Concordia.[305] It begins with an editorial which is decidedly ambivalent about "the protesters' methods" but unequivocal in its characterization of the FTAA and the process of its negotiation as undemocratic and counter to the interests of "civil society," especially in less prosperous parts of the Americas. The FTAA, in their estimation "only serves transnational corporations and financial moguls." "How," they ask, "can we trust, or even respect, companies that slash thousands of jobs every time their astounding profit margins drop?" Or, for that matter "our elected leaders when they are negotiating an agreement which so clearly pleases large corporations?" Although, as they put it, "protesters' methods may seem ineffective or inappropriate, their ideas may appear too abstract or uselessly well-meaning [...] they may seem like a good track, even the way to the future." In sum:

> Back at the Summit, as the teargas lifts from the skies of Quebec City, we see again, in all its crudeness, this isolation that is ours, that of civil society. As the fences disappear, brutal symbols of this anti-democratic distribution of sovereignty promised by the FTAA, one positive aspect remains behind the smoke, much more promising than the falling fence. A consciousness of the Americas is appearing.[306]

Coverage of the Summit itself, as noted, fell outside of the publishing cycle for the *Link*[307] and the *Daily*, though several staff attended, and many wrote about it; I was also able to speak with several, and those discussions (along with content from the PUIQ special issue) form the basis of the following section, which revisits the ambivalent relationship (or tensions) between a more 'professional' journalism and activism in the case of anti-globalization protest coverage at the 2001 Summit. In the weeks prior, however, both the

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[305] Though J. Kelly Nestruck recalls that they did not benefit from access to the Daily's regular distributor, and that the job was accomplished, in that case, "with my mum's Crown Vic and a trunk full of copies." This was not the only hitch in the case of the Daily, from which Nestruck was the only representative officially credited with participating in the PUIQ project. As he recalls:
> I kind of got in trouble afterwards; I was really in favour of us doing stuff with the French papers and had agreed that Daily would contribute to this, but it hadn't really been run by the board [...] There was a question of whether they would pay the $2000 that was our contribution [to the cost of production for the PUIQ issue].

[306] "The Slumber of Words." Editorial. *La Journal de la PUIQ*, 24/4/2001: 3.

[307] The Link's annual summer issue, as noted in Chapter 5, was not published in 2001 due to struggle over the paper's operations.

*Link* and *Daily* left readers with content to put them in mind of the upcoming events in Quebec.

The *Daily* presented a special three-page feature, which combined mobilizing information ("A brief guide to getting there, staying there, and preparing yourself for the protests"[308]), a recap of the run-up to the Summit ("Drowning the FTAA by Numbers: A year in activism at McGill"[309]) and an informative piece summarizing key areas of concern with the agreement ("A Catalogue of Anxieties – or, Why so many people dislike the FTAA."[310]) The first is a how-to for prospective protesters, detailing transport options, including low-cost buses organized by FTAA-Alert McGill/Concordia (and the CSU), accommodations such as Operation Québec Printemps' "adopt-an-activist" homestay campaign (or "getting beat up and thrown in jail"), civil disobedience/direct action workshops by groups such as SalAMI (formed in the late 1990s to oppose the MAI – AMI in French) and CLAC, and legal information from Citizens Opposed to Police Brutality and the Legal Defense Collective. The second, a listing of notable figures (200-300: McGill students signed-on for FTAA-Alert's bus; 10: "globalization-related speaking events and conferences" in the previous eight months at McGill, 32-31: vote which nixed an initiative to accommodate students missing final exams to attend the protest,[311] etc.), optimistically emphasizes that "at McGill, widely reputed to be one of the most conservative universities in the country, the almost-palpable excitement for the upcoming protests, has been little short of a watershed, with campus activists saying there's no way that McGill students voiced [sic] can be ignored in Quebec City."

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[308] Addario-Berry, Louigi. "The Summit of the Americas." *McGill Daily*, 05/4/2001: 13
[309] Bricker, John. "Drowning the FTAA by Numbers." *McGill Daily*, 05/4/2001: 13
[310] Dubinsky, Zach. "A Catalogue of Anxieties – or, Why so many people dislike the FTAA." *McGill Daily*, 05/4/2001: 14-15.
[311] Concordia, it should be noted, passed a similar motion at the time.

The more substantial accompanying article by editor Zach Dubinsky explicitly frames its informative role in opposition to one mainstream media characterization of the upcoming protests:

> The National Post has painted an anticipated 20,000 protesters as "agitators massing their forces" for a "Quebec brawl." But they're almost certainly wrong. The demonstrators will form as diverse a group as any that has gathered in Quebec: the young and the old, the rich and the poor, Argentine and Canadian, veteran activist and curious neophyte, right-wing and left-wing – and, yes, peaceful and provocative. Indeed, the only thing that will really unite them: their opposition to the current tone of "globalization."

The piece goes on to emphasize that "the amorphous international movement generally do not condemn the contemporary trend towards global interconnectedness itself," but rather "are worried about the movement among governments that goes by that euphemistic name" and emphasizes the deregulation of trade and financial flows (entailing the commodification of resources and incentives to cut social welfare provisions, and engendering a "race to the bottom" for states competing to provide the most business-friendly regulatory environment to attract transnational capital). The facing page traces out an interconnected web of concerns (summarized, rather than quoted, here at some length as they provide an instructive resume of the issues, exemplary of efforts to contextualize the protest event):

1. "Sovereignty": the piece describes concerns about domestic regulations struck down on behalf of corporate complainants under the provisions of trade agreements; Chapter 11 of NAFTA, which allows corporations to sue national governments, it notes, had already been used to reverse a Canadian decision to ban MMT, a potentially dangerous gasoline additive - because scientific evidence of its toxicity was "inconclusive".[312]

2. "Capitalism": it also notes some of the "most radical critiques" from groups such as CLAC, which hone in on capitalist market relations as cause and view the negative effects of trade

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[312] It is worth noting that Chapter 11 concerns are ongoing, with the Green Party of Canada, for example, drawing attention to a Dow Chemical suit targeting Ontario and Quebec's bans on cosmetic pesticide use in 2009. See:
http://greenparty.ca/media-release/2009-04-14/nafta-chapter-11-threatens-health-and-safety-canadians

agreements such as the FTAA as symptomatic. Such groups, Dubinsky writes, are not "anti-globalization per se," citing CLAC's declared support for "the globalization of genuine solidarity between peoples with the goal of collectively resisting the same root causes of exploitation."

3. "Protecting Public Services": on this count, a Chapter 11 suit filed by United Parcel Service against Canada Post, contending (as Maude Barlow puts it) "that the very existence of our postal system constitutes unfair competition" is presented as exemplary of concerns that turn on the possible commodification of public goods and services from water and electricity to education and health care.

4. "Indigenous Peoples": the piece notes that the emergence of the Zapatista movement among largely indigenous populations in Chiapas, Mexico (iconic for many anti-capitalist anti-globalization activists) coincided with NAFTA's implementation in 1994. That agreement obviated land rights secured in reforms put in place following the Mexican Revolution, and – along with concerns about intellectual property rights asserted over indigenous knowledge – thus provides a basis for worries about such an agreement's extension to the Americas as a whole.

5. "Intellectual Property": in addition to the aforementioned, the piece describes concerns about the extension of intellectual property regulations modeled after those of the US – which would eliminate alternative legal measures in Latin America which mandate competitors right to produce patented products in exchange for a licensing fee, a particular concern for generic pharmaceutical production.

6. "Education": raises concerns from groups such as the Canadian Federation of Students that university education is a potential candidate for significant privatization; the piece contends that "these anxieties aren't unfounded," citing a Globe and Mail report earlier that year that described a secret document from one of the negotiation teams which "outlines a

regime that would see all service sectors – including such once-hallowed areas as health, public education and child care – open to competition."

7. "For the Rich Only?": in sum, as the author states, "[t]he gist of free-trade and investment agreements such as the FTAA, their opponents contend, is to facilitate the cross-border movement of goods and capital, to the benefit of those with capital (the rich) and those who profit off of goods (ditto)." Capital mobility creates a disincentive to shore up the quality of labour conditions (as companies can simply move elsewhere), creating "the theory says [...] an unstoppable downward spiral of wages, work conditions, and quality of life as developing countries rush to loosen their regulations in order to compete for international investment that seeks out the cheapest source of labour and materials."

Alternatives such as an EU-type arrangement (potentially providing for free movement of labour, Dubinsky adds) or the inclusion of labour-standards provisions in the FTAA are noted – but set in relief by comments from Canadian Trade Minister Pierre Pettigrew, who baldly states that the FTAA is no place for such initiatives, arguing that they would "deprive the countries of South America with one of their assets, which is cheap labour," and that imposing Canadian-style labour standards would be unreasonable "because our workers get more because they are more productive."

This *Daily* feature on the eve of the Summit highlights both the inclination of some student journalists to portray a wide range of dissenting voices in sympathetic terms, and an effort to arrange the various (and sometimes disparate) concerns and positions of activists in a way that makes key issues accessible to the reader. The kind of wide-ranging thematic treatment presented here is very much a counterpoint to a tendency observed in *Gazette* coverage, which typically discusses the actual agreement in articles which draw primarily on pro-institutional sources, and presents a hodge-podge of briefly related concerns in quotations from activists. Rather than digging to provide concrete examples

which exemplify particular reservations about the agreement (or about free trade in general), as Dubinsky does here, mainstream accounts (as, to be fair, do many pieces in the *Link* and *Daily*) simply state the abstract contentions of dissenters – all-too-often counterbalanced with denials by government and trade officials – without much attention to the veracity of, or the basis for, such claims. Pieces such as this therefore present an example that mainstream journalists could do well to follow.

The *Link*'s special issue on globalization, a few days later, contains over a dozen articles, touching on a wide range of groups, topics and events. Items range from accounts of legal efforts to take down the security fence in Quebec (as a violation of Charter rights to free assembly and presumption of innocence)[313] and Akwasasne Mohawks' hospitality[314] to activists denied entry to Canada by Customs and Immigration[315] to activist groups rallying against the commodification of nature (through the patenting of biological organisms),[316] a Université de Louvain professor decrying the shift in the field of postsecondary education towards universities acting like "knowledge corporations,"[317] and a chronology of significant moments in Canadian free trade initiatives.[318] One item which is particularly striking (as an example of how student journalists can effectively contextualize such events in ways that many mainstream accounts fail to) is a full-page effort at profiling five groups preparing for the protest, including three labour organizations (Federation des Travailleurs du Québec, Canadian Labour Congress and Canadian Autoworkers) and two activist groups,

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[313] Collin, Sara. "Summit fence to be taken down?" *The Link*, 10/4/2001: 9.
[314] Akwasasne straddles the US/Canada border, and Mohawk Nation members – who open the border annually, according to the article's author, "as an assertion of independence" – agreed to allow several hundred US activists to cross, thus both asserting solidarity against NAFTA/FTAA and contesting the legitimacy of borders predicated on the sovereignty of colonial governments. The actual crossing, set to take place on April 19th, 2001, was blocked by Canadian immigration forces. See Graeber (2009: Chapter 3).
[315] Kelly, Sarah. "Customs officials more vigilant at US-Canada border crossing." *The Link*, 10/4/2001: 9.
[316] Graham, Adam. "You are what you eat." *The Link*, 10/4/2000: 13.
[317] Marandon, Nicolas. "Students are becoming commodities." *The Link*, 10/4/2001: 12.
[318] "Canada and free trade: a chronology." *The Link*, 10/4/2001: 11.

SalAMI and the Quebec Public Interest Research Group (QPIRG).[319] The piece again does something not seen, for example, in the *Gazette* – and very much akin to the "From the Horse's Mouth" pieces introduced by the *Daily* in the mid-2000s[320] - by giving a platform for movement organizations to speak for themselves (answering questions with responses presented verbatim), here in a succinct format which covers a range of issues. While drawing out both common goals and dissimilarities, pieces such as this – or the *Daily* feature just described, and a great deal more – avoid the tendency common in mainstream coverage at the time to describe movement goals or ideals as "incoherent" (e.g. Adler and Mittelman 2004), and allow a plurality of voices to reach readers seeking more information on the movement. The list of questions put to representatives is quite open, and seeks both to clarify the positions of individual groups on key issues, and map out priorities and connections with other campaigns and protests – allowing neophytes to orient themselves relative to the different positions:

1. Who are you?
2. As briefly as possible, why is your group opposed to the Free Trade Area of the Americas?
3. Does your group advocate violent protests?
4. Will your group attend the People's Summit[321]?
5. How many people do you anticipate will represent your group at the protests?
6. How many members in total does your group have?
7. What political protests and campaigns has your group participated in recently?
8. What does your group perceive as the greatest potential threat that could come out of the official summit?
9. Anything you'd like to add?

The importance of such efforts is highlighted all the more by another short article which features Concordia students' own impressions and plans vis-à-vis the Summit. Even though the upcoming event had already been the focus of a great deal of media attention, some

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[319] Cuppage, Josh. "Protesters come clean." *The Link*, 10/4/2001: 10.
[320] See Chapter 5.
[321] An alternative summit organized by NGOs, similar to the model of the World Social Forum which had been inaugurated in Porto Alegre, Brazil in January 2001 (see Seoane and Taddei 2002; Drainville 2005).

were left with an appetite for more information.[322] One student suggested that she was going "not because I have strong beliefs," but because "it will be really interesting to see and hear what other people have to say." Indeed, it is probably well-worth pointing out that a student newspaper – especially on topics of contention which are not necessarily treated with sympathy or depth in mainstream media – is in a unique position to reach a large constituency not already convinced one way or the other, one which may be inclined to interest due to engagement with related issues in coursework (or having been drawn in by activist messages circulated on campus), and one which may be apt to identify with an student activist role similar to that which motivates many student journalists. It is worth recalling 2009-2010 *Link* editor Terrine Friday's assertion, almost a decade later, that:

> As university students, we are allowed to stomp our feet a little, and stand on that soap-box and scream. And it's our social responsibility to do it...because we can, pretty much.

Also featured in the *Link*'s special issue are items which revisit themes sure of particular interest to student journalists: the dangers facing journalists in covering demonstrations (a theme which recurs later in this chapter) and the efforts of alternative media in providing coverage from a perspective different to that of the mainstream. Covering a conference held by the Canadian Association of Journalists (and recalling the recurrent interest in and potential alignment with professional journalists noted in Chapter 4), one piece calls attention to safety issues affecting journalists in light of the fact that "police have stopped differentiating between them and the protesters."[323] CBC Newsworld produce Idella Storino, for example, is cited acknowledging that police claim that "in the split second that they have to make a decision they can't pick out who's not a protester," but further notes that she "remains dubious about how hard it is to recognize a notepad and press pass."

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[322] Toussaint, Maya. "FTAA protest on the minds of Concordia students." *The Link*, 10/4/2001.
[323] Christopoulos, Tina. "Journalists covering demos face police crackdown." *The Link*, 10/4/2001: 6.

Two association members, Peter Ray and Al McGuinness (who also recalls an incident at Oka where he claims "intent was very clear" when police fired tear gas at journalists some distance from the blockade), concur that arguing with police regarding one's journalist status is "useless" – and Ray suggests that "not getting in the middle of a scenario" is important, despite others' assertions that behind the cover of "police operations" elements of a story may become inaccessible. The resulting problems in the case of demonstration coverage are highlighted by Yves Schaeffner, the editor of *Ici* (a Montreal alternative-weekly paper), who notes a "trend to keep journalists away from protesters," impacting the former's ability to present voices of dissent alongside more 'factual' accounts, and suggests that it is often difficult to obtain useful information from police directly – especially for "alternative" outlets (vs. the major dailies).

Independent media is only briefly treated in the *Link*'s special issue, with one short piece. The article states that "300 independent journalists" are set to converge on the Summit, and draws attention to CMAQ, the Quebec Independent Media Centre (which presented streaming audio and regular video updates from the event, in addition to posting user-produced articles), calling the success on IndyMedia in Seattle (where the IMC site got 300,000 hits per day) and after "astounding."[324] It cites one CMAQ representative, once again framing an 'alternative' to mainstream accounts – one which resonates with much of the treatment given to anti-globalization issues by both the *Link* and the *Daily*:

> "For a year now, we have seen the corporate media being highly interested in Quebec City," said Michel Lambert from the Centre des Medias Alternatifs du Quebec. He said the media have been focusing on violence and security issues, but neglecting to discuss the FTAA itself. "The first purpose of CMAQ is to encourage debate in speaking about those issues."

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[324] Faguy, Steve. "Indy media centre get ready for free trade of articles." *The Link*, 10/4/2001: 13.

Given the length of the article, there is little room for detail,[325] but a distinction between "independent media centres" and "traditional media" is posited: the former "give ordinary people a chance to be heard." In an indication of how this might be viewed from a more 'professional' standpoint, this is described as being accomplished by "lax editorial policies" (referring to the fact that only discriminatory content posted to the site is removed, not unlike the student paper's letters section). A somewhat unusual way of putting it, the characterization seems to set up a division – all the more notable given both the *Link* and *Daily*'s regular claims to the mantle of "independent media," a term also claimed by IndyMedia-type producers – which once again highlights a tension between a more 'professional' journalism and an 'activist' orientation. Even in passing, the statement suggests the centrality of 'editorial standards' (not to mention the differentiation between journalists and 'ordinary people') in defining 'traditional media.' The choice of the term 'traditional,' rather than 'mainstream' leaves the reader uncertain as to where the Link stands (presumably not endorsing 'lax editorial policies'), highlighting the fact that the two student papers (and many student journalists) occupy a liminal, hybrid/alternative (and often ambivalent) position. Such tensions, along with the priorities and impressions of student journalists interviewed from the *Link* and *Daily*, are the subject of the following section.

### Ambivalence in action/the view from the streets: Link and Daily staff at the Summit

Having spoken with several former editors from the two papers who travelled to Quebec City in 2001, two of whom are on record as having participated in the publication of the PUIQ bilingual special issue covering the meeting, movement and protest, it is clear that student journalists from the *Link* and *Daily* saw the issues highlighted by movement

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[325] I would likely not dwell on this piece as much as I do, save for the fact that its author is eventual editor-in-chief Steve Faguy.

constituents as important, and saw themselves as playing a role in reporting the event differently than mainstream media outlets. Those involved with the papers at the time saw anti-globalization as "a huge topic."[326] However, for some, the occasion also highlighted the tension between a more 'professional' journalism, concerned with relatively detached reporting, and a more activist practice inclined to open alignment with protesters' actions and messages. Dubinsky highlights the importance placed on covering the event:

> It was very important to me, and I think to other people who knew about it, that in the runup to it and in the actual event itself, that we be diligent in reporting the kinds of civil rights abuses there might be, the kinds of crackdowns on free speech, the security barrier that went up and how that was going to affect people's lives. And especially so because those kinds of concerns were being dismissed out of hand by the mainstream media, or the mainstream media preferred to focus on power, or they just don't have the time. [327]

Others explicitly described a commitment to airing protesters' views, contesting the mainstream media's tendency to present protest events in 'episodic' fashion which often reserves more detailed discussion of the issues social movement actors seek to raise for pieces which draw on elite sources (whether policy experts or politicians). As one former *Link* editor put it:

> I think mainstream media has always, and continues to cover activist events as, you know, what did the protesters do, what didn't they do, were they bad, were they good, and then cover the issue itself in a very mainstream way, whereas we came at it from a critical perspective and from the student protester perspective [...] It wasn't 'oh, what did the leaders say,' it was 'what did the protesters say?'[328]

Another former *Link* writer and editor, Josh Cuppage, highlights the orientation of 'alternative journalists' who, like some student journalists, tend to view journalistic work as a venue for or form of activism (even if that work is seen as 'journalism first,' such a view is distinct from any which holds to an ostensible political neutrality). In an article published in the PIUQ special issue, Cuppage looks at "the scene inside the pressroom at the Centre for

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[326] Nestruck, Kelly. Personal interview, February 2010; Nestruck also noted that iconic *No Logo* author and prominent anti-globalization intellectual personality Naomi Klein "was a McGill Daily alumni [...] we always liked to call attention to that."
[327] Personal interview, March 2010.
[328] Confidential source. Personal Interview, February 2010.

Media Alternatives of Quebec."[329] "Journalists affiliated with CMAQ [disclaimer: the author is one of them]," he notes "often make no bones about their take on the mainstream media's coverage of the Summit." As one 'alternative journalist' put it, "Mass media aren't in touch with the people, more work in the field is where you get the real information." Another suggests that "[i]nformation inside the perimeter is controlled so much...what you find on the outside is better information."

Also noted is that independent or alternative media producers are typically unpaid and ostensibly 'more passionate' (in contrast to working professionals) and undergo experiences that accredited journalists do not. A view among some participants of 'objectivity' as "bullshit" (shared by a number of student journalists I spoke with) is coupled, in the words of one alternative journalist (and former activist with SalAMI) with the contention that "the why and the how are never answered in the mass media. They're very good at the who what where and when, but it needs more substance." And, as Cuppage subsequently writes (underlining the potential non-exclusivity of 'journalism' and 'activism,' a citing the contention that 'alternative journalists' and those with official accreditation may have different experiences):

> some independent journalists claimed that the mainstream media were unwilling to get close enough to the violence at the summit to document incidents of police brutality. They often acknowledged that they came to Quebec City with a clear agenda: to tell the stories of the activists, So, then, are these people journalists or activists first? Turcot seemed representative of most journalists surveyed. "I'm a journalist and an artist before I'm an activist," he said. "Actually, I think that the journalism that I'm doing while I'm here is a form of activism itself."

Ultimately, the article takes it's journalistic distance in reporting, rather than registering a clear opinion, on the apparent crossover (and implied tension) between the roles of 'journalist' and 'activist' – Cuppage presents the issue as undecided, leaving the question "are these people journalists or activists first?" largely to the judgment of the reader.

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[329] Cuppage, Josh. "Indymedia journalists look in the mirror." *La journal de la PUIQ*, 24/4/2001: 15.

For some, the Summit was not only a place where such tensions prompted reflection; it was also one where sharp divisions emerged. Nestruck, who wrote a piece on street theatre at the Summit for the PUIQ special issue,[330] describes the Summit as "a seminal event [...] in the evolution of my thinking," a site and moment in time in which a number of people were "trying to figure out what side of the line between journalists and activists they were on." Recounting a scene from the Independent Media Centre, the former editor describes then-President of CUP, Jeremy Nelson, having a rubber bullet "fired in his vicinity":

> I don't remember if it hit his leg or not. He carried it into the Independent Media Centre where we were [...] He kind of lost it. I mean, we'd all been teargassed a lot, so... I remember him putting on these giant gloves and mask, and he was like 'I'm gonna go back out there and I'm going to throw tear gas canisters back at the cops.' I just thought, well, he's lost it. He's supposed to be a journalist. That's what I identified as, a journalist. [...] Later on he started sending out these messages on the CUP listserv about how the police were going to imminently descend on the independent media centre, and they were teargassing the centre.[331]

While Nestruck concedes that "there might have been tear gas seeping in" (and Cuppage's article notes that clashes between police and protesters outside frequently disrupted operations), he suggests that the claim that the centre itself was under siege was alarmist, and ultimately inaccurate – a view apparently shared by others, and a flashpoint for the kind of tension described, prompting, as Nestruck puts it "a big division in CUP."[332]

Of course, while such an example highlights an exceptional rupture of the tension between ('professional') journalism and activism that was already prominent for some, it is important not to underplay the valuable role of independent media in light of a single incident. In situ, an impression of being under siege and an immediate identification with protesters targeted by repressive police measures is understandable. Dubinsky's evaluation of the IMC as a whole, for example, notes a primary concern with 'documentation' and

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[330] Specifically, a piece on mimes, a subject with which he says he felt more comfortable than some of the substantive political issues at play, and which resonates with his later professional work as a theatre critic.
[331] Telephone interview, February 2010.
[332] Ibid.

makes the point that the politicization of activism-oriented alternative journalists by no means amounted to a rigid concern with 'correct political interpretation':

> Given the resources they had, given that they were the independent media centre, I though they did a fantastic job [...] it seemed like people were very civil, it didn't seem like, you know, the organizing base for the fourth column of the Marxist International or anything, it seemed like people were concerned about documenting.[333]

Concerned with gaining a more global account of events which reflected something more than the most dramatic highlights, student journalists made a priority of spending time "hanging out on the ground, talking to Quebecers," trying to make sense of the situation. Indeed, the *Daily*'s Dubinsky (who was actually writing for the Cleveland Free Times, a now-defunct alternative-weekly newspaper) came out of the experience with an account of the events which one would be hard-pressed to find in mainstream coverage. By his account, the more confrontational aspects of the Summit could be described as:

> essentially a kind of ground warfare going on between the security establishment [...and] a highly variegated group. You had on the one hand activists committing acts of civil disobedience, but nothing violent or criminal, you had people out and out rioting who were not, to my understanding – and I feel that I observed this even more than any of the other media who were there, because I was out in the streets until 5am – the damage, the vandalism that was committed was not by activists who had traveled to Quebec City from abroad, it was actually mostly by Quebec City youth who saw this as an excuse to revel, to riot or whatever, who had come in from the suburbs, or people who lived in the city, and in many cases it was in fact a reaction against the fact that their city had been turned into a security state.[334]

Further describing local residents caught up in police street-clearing operations, including a family in the street ("standing around, they had bandanas over their mouths [...] the grandmother was in the street") in the Old City as teargas poured into the windows of their home, Dubinsky emphasized the last point:

> I think there was a local uprising against the police presence, to some extent, and that manifested itself mostly in youth who came out and were really mad that the police were taking over their city for the purposes of a bunch of heads of state.[335]

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[333] Personal interview, March 2010.
[334] Ibid.
[335] Ibid.

The account just cited reveals a perspective searching to explain – rather than merely to note – the more disorderly aspects of the protest, and appeals to the journalist's role in seeking to witness and facilitate understanding rather than simply to note the fact of incidents of property destruction and confrontation. It also reiterates the point made by one 'independent journalist' cited by Cuppage (cited above), who insists on the importance of (and the failure of some mainstream journalists to engage in) "more work in the field." Getting 'in the middle of scenario' presents a means of gathering relevant information to convey to readers and to facilitate understanding. This, alongside commitment to taking a 'critical' perspective (including vis-à-vis the background of security arrangements which underline the asymmetry of power between protesters and authorities, considered as an excessive imposition), and seeking to present the perspectives of protesters – alongside a view of their own practice as explicitly addressing lacunae in mainstream coverage – underlines the ways in which *Link* and *Daily* staff sought to provide 'alternative' coverage at the 2001 Summit.

Yet, at the same time, the event presented a difficult scenario in which identification as either 'journalist' or 'activist' was questionable. Cuppage's article emphasizes the undecided status of 'alternative journalists' at the Independent media centre, and presents what is essentially a collapse of the separation between the two roles in cases where journalistic production is viewed as a form of activism. Ultimately, the Summit prompted reflection as it fore-grounded these tensions, and presented student journalists with other 'independent' media producers, explicitly 'on side' with protesters. Still, the negotiation of the kind of liminal positioning left to student journalists retains the possibility of coming to a point of rupture, as in the case described by Nestruck, where the limit-case represented by the actions of a

fellow student journalist prompted a re-affirmed primary identification as journalist, not activist.

### *Anti-globalization after Quebec City: connections and continuing concerns*

The anti-globalization movement by no means fell off the radar at the *Link* and the *Daily* following the Quebec City Summit. Indeed, in November of the same year the *Link* published an editorial dealing with a follow-up protest against the G20 in Ottawa – once again picking up on the theme of police violence, but this time adding an angle reminiscent of the critiques of *Gazette* coverage of student protest outlined in Chapter 4.[336] The editorial recounts not only how "anti-G20 protesters – almost all of whom were peaceful – were kicked, beaten, tear-gassed and pepper sprayed [...] bitten by police dogs, randomly arrested and denied access to their lawyers," but also how they were "flayed by the next day's newspapers." The Ottawa Citizen (the *Gazette*'s CanWest daily counterpart) is singled out, with citations of front-page columnist Leonard Stern's (barely post-September 11th) assertion that "the demonstrators are still several rungs behind Osama bin Laden. But they're climbing the same ladder," and Randall Denley, who called the event "a remarkably pointless waste of time" – and a note that there was no remotely supportive contrast which made it to print.

The writer(s) take the opportunity to highlight the mediating role of journalism in conveying an impression of protest events to wider publics – who, in this case, are left with "a very skewed understanding." Nonetheless, the piece points not only to right-wing bias in mainstream media; it also suggests that the anti-globalization movement needs to be "more media-savvy," and chides protesters leery of mainstream media in light of negative portrayals in the past, noting that "a handful" at the Ottawa protest had "hassled and

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[336] "When the mainstream media burns protesters." Editorial. *The Link*, 20/11/2001: 11.

grabbed a camera away from a CTV reporter." What follows is a strikingly subjective view of journalism. Noting some protesters' aggressive treatment of journalists, and that a protest without media attention has little reach or lasting effect, the piece states the following:

> On top of that, CTV's 11:00pm news on Saturday prominently mentioned protester violence. CBC's news, on the other hand, referred to violence on the part of police. Why? Because a CBC reporter was beaten by police and bitten by police dogs. He later said that when he told the police officer he was a journalist, the officer only beat him further.

In conclusion, the writer(s) indicate that protesters "need to work harder to encourage [the mainstream media] and improve its slant," and that media "needs to get a handle on its mandate, too, making a conscious effort to give space to both sides of an issue." While these are not revolutionary ideas, and the analysis of why CTV and CBC late-night news accounts differed may be somewhat simplistic, the editorial is striking in how it seeks to describe the problem from a perspective which almost pleads with demonstrators to give journalists the raw materials most conducive to a sympathetic portrayal, and which reproaches the Citizen and others on the terms of a staid and professional press, attacking "bias" and failure to "give space to both sides."

Essentially, recalling a metaphor from Chapter 2, the editorial seems to suggest that the movement and its aims are important, and that mainstream media is often culpable for misrepresenting its activities, but that the practices acceptable in the field of journalism only allow a limited angle of refraction – requiring more media-friendly protest (and protesters) to allow both student and mainstream journalists to present such events in a light which confers legitimacy and draws attention to movement issues (potentially diffusing and even reinforcing movement-generated collective action frames). The implication is that, even for journalists sympathetic to a given movement's larger aims and concerns, it may be difficult to produce a story which (without overstretching the bounds of journalistic ethics) portrays a movement or protest event in such a fashion if the actions and

self-presentations of organizers and participants do not provide the raw materials for them to do so.

The way that this feeling among student journalists is rendered clearly in the above-cited piece once again highlights the particular liminal positioning of student journalists: insofar as the political mission of the paper and their own convictions lead them to an 'activist' orientation, precisely as *journalists* (with the inevitable appeal to standards common to the wider field of journalism, which may be negotiated, but not transgressed beyond certain limits), they must maintain a critical and autonomous view, and acknowledge aspects of events likely to be seen as problematic by many readers. This aspect of positioning, again drawing out the tension between 'activist' and 'professional' orientations, presents a conundrum which is all the more potentially vexing in the case of the annual March Against Police Brutality, coverage of which occupies the remainder of this chapter. While coverage of anti-globalization protest events did not cease with the Summit of the Americas and its immediate aftermath,[337] this second case presents a particularly interesting example, and one that can be traced[338] across the entire period of reference.

### Coverage of the annual March Against Police Brutality in Montreal

Once again taking up the question of how the *Link* and the *Daily* cover contentious protest events, and following up on the twin concerns for police violence or criminalization

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[337] A year later, the FTAA was again the focus of attention as prominent coverage was given a demonstration as part of a 'hemispheric day of action' against the agreement (though I should note that the Gazette, in stark contrast to the Link and Daily, printed a single after-the-fact story). The Montreal demonstration was particularly pertinent to the papers' readers in that it was largely framed by organizers (including the Canadian Federation of Students) as a fight against the possible commercialization of higher education. Subsequent anti-globalization protest events, including 2003 demonstrations against the G20 and those which targeted the 2007 Montebello Summit, were also covered. Though *space here does not permit an adequate presentation of those instances, I should* note that the concern with police violence and the criminalization of dissent which arose around the early anti-globalization events discussed here, as it is for the second case described here, remained very much present.
[338] With some inevitable omissions.

of dissent and mainstream media portrayal of protest (especially with regard to the question of protest violence), I now turn to another (albeit not unconnected) social movement effort, and specifically to coverage of one annual event in Montreal which regularly appears in the pages of the two papers throughout the period of reference. The March Against Police Brutality is an annual demonstration in Montreal, organized every March 15th since 1997 by la Collectif opposé a la brutalité policière/Collective Opposed to Police Brutality (COBP, formerly Citoyennes opposé a la brutalité policière/Citizens Opposed to Police Brutality). From among the 43 police killings in Montreal since 1987,[339] prominent cases are put to the public eye, as is the quotidian targeting of marginalized populations and the often opaque, even collegial,[340] nature of investigations concerning officers. The event sees strong participation by self-identified anarchists and other anti-authoritarians, by street youth, and a range of others. It often sparks authorities' ire, refusing to register a planned route, employing polarizing rhetoric (e.g. referring to officers involved in police killings as *"flics-assassins,"* or assassin-cops), and regularly entailing incidents of property damage/destruction and police-protester confrontation and violence.

For the most part, other than witnessing the event directly, audiences for English-language print coverage may turn to the local CanWest daily, the *Gazette*. Coverage there – while still on occasion inclined to give the concerns of protesters more sympathetic treatment – often echoes the problems facing left protest events since Graham Murdock's (1981) analysis of the famous 1968 Grosvenor Square anti-Vietnam War demo, covered by the *Daily Express* under the headline "Fringe fanatics foiled at demonstration – what the bobbies faced." News coverage and editorial content is often event-based, focusing on

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[339] As of March 2010, an always updated figure regularly invoked by COBP – beginning with the November 11 killing of Anthony Griffin, a black Montrealer shot as he tried to flee police after arrest.
[340] As, for example, when officers Jean-Loup Lapointe and partner Stéphanie Pilotte were not questioned, and permitted to drive together to their detachment – only later called upon to produce written statements, which in Lapointe's case took 30 days – in the initial stages of the investigation into Lapointe's shooting of Fredy Villanueva in a Montreal North park in August 2008.

arrests, disorder and 'cat-and-mouse' accounts of the day's action, and many stories privilege 'primary definers' (Hall et al 1978) such as police and municipal officials, often projecting a seeming, and somewhat self-sustaining, public 'consensus' which casts the protest – at best – as airing a valid concern, but as incoherent and misguided in its tactics, simply giving carte blanche to vandals and hooligans with no discernible political agenda.

Alternative coverage is otherwise limited to CMAQ (Quebec IndyMedia), activist blogs/social networkers, citizen journalists' uploads of images and video, and COBP's own occasional magazine, *L'agent provocateur*. Such outlets address themselves more to audiences already seeking an activist-friendly account, and raw visual material in some instances often highlights violent conflict, sometimes verging on what some activists call 'riot porn' (imagery which revels in confrontational or destructive aspects of protest events without serving a larger purpose) – though citizen journalists can prove invaluable in documenting heavy-handed police actions and thus reinforcing movement framing which casts the police as aggressors.[341] The *Link* and *Daily*, however, potentially bridge a gap between activist media and wider (mainly student) publics by employing presentation which might vie, to some degree, for credibility – even for skeptics – with mainstream analogues, forging broader thematic links to issues of concern to activists and others...and, sometimes, by providing personal accounts of what seems to be an increasing trend towards sweeping up student journalists along with other independent media in mass arrests.

It is not my contention that the March itself, movement strategies or the actions of participants are unproblematic (I reserve a more in-depth consideration of tactics and actions at protest events for other projects). Rather, it is that student newspapers have

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[341] And indeed, academic efforts such as those of Dupuis-Deri (2007a) emphasize that a militant aesthetic (associated with the infamous 'Black Bloc(s)') is not necessarily unaccompanied by thoughtful and principled social and political analysis.

often done a better job than their mainstream counterparts in evoking the context and reasoning for action, that news-section coverage is more varied, and that both news and editorial content are more inclined to entertain – and present to readers – the possibility that even protest actions which involve confrontation with police and property destruction may be legitimately motivated, and not automatically de-legitimated by that fact – and to emphasize the asymmetry of power between the two sides. There are a few key differences.

In 'straight news' coverage, the *Link* and *Daily* have tended to more prominently feature protester sources providing reflection or describing non-trivial reasons for participation (often going beyond one-line quotes), focusing less exclusively on 'factual' reporting of crowd movements and arrests (or the valuation of damages and city hall's response). The respective papers (particularly the *Daily*) have also tended – as described in connection with 'campaigns' around issues such as the 2005 student strike in Chapter 5 – to use elements of the paper other than 'news' to supplement coverage, support movement constituents (by keeping the issue in focus) and provide a different view of the event itself. Such instances include publishing previews of the event (either as 'event' listings or by presenting and contextualizing an upcoming March in light of other events), verbatim interviews with COBP representatives, photo essays which depict police violence against protesters, satirical digs in the comment portion of the paper, and taking a strong editorial stance reinforcing the legitimacy of protester concerns about police violence, targeting of the homeless and minority groups, and the criminalization of dissent. Another 'angle' lies, recently, in coverage dealing with arrests of independent journalists, including a number of student journalists from the *Link* and *Daily*.

One 2006 *Daily* feature, to provide one example of attempts to frame the story in a way which clearly takes up framing similar to that forwarded by COBP, notes participation by street youth, "the demographic most regularly subject to police brutality," and predicts that

the following year will see "those most vulnerable to oppression by the authorities [taking] to the streets to vent their rage at both those who abuse them and the society that looks the other way."[342] A 2007 news piece in the *Daily* foregrounds the case of Mohamed Anas Bennis, shot and killed by the SPVM in 2005 within view of a surveillance camera, the footage from which, along with the results of an SQ investigation (including evidence cited by police that Bennis had actually stabbed a police officer), had been suppressed by Quebec's ministry of justice.[343] The same piece describes onlookers in front of a Cote-des-Neiges barbershop cheering, the proprietor yelling "Fuck racial profiling, you can come in here for a free haircut anytime!" Other articles from the period of reference highlight a 2005 United Nations report condemning the SPVM's[344] use of mass arrests at demonstrations, note the participation and perspectives of sex workers-rights groups, immigrants' groups and queer advocates, and relay personalized accounts of police assaults told by individuals present at the protest. Accompanying the *Link*'s 2009 coverage, discussed in more depth below, is a story about a mother denied the chance to see her 16-year-old son in police custody.[345] While the *Gazette* has taken note of the Bennis case and the more recent Villanueva case (a major focus of the 2009 demonstration), and typically acknowledges the presence of street youth or squeegee kids (though not attributing them status as frequent targets of police brutality), other such items don't make final copy.

The *Link* and *Daily* thus act as alternative(s) by providing factual reporting otherwise unavailable, as well as furnshing efforts at interpretation indicating an examination of power dynamics (often better aligned with movement-generated framing than mainstream accounts). Furthermore, protest event coverage is often used, especially in editorial and feature content, as a springboard to discuss broader issues including racial profiling and the

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[342] "A protest against police brutality." *McGill Daily*, 16/3/2006: 8.
[343] Rosenfeld, Jesse. "Hundreds counter police brutality." *McGill Daily*, 19/3/2007: 8.
[344] Service de police de la ville de Montreal, Montreal's municipal police.
[345] Raspopow, Clare. "Worried mother denied right to see underage son." *The Link*, 17/3/2009: 5.

exclusion, ticketing and harassment of the homeless and street youth, to join calls for public inquiry into specific cases of police killing, and to advocate reform to processes of complaints investigation and community relations. To be fair, writers' orientations vary, as does the broader tone of each publication. Indeed, one of the least sympathetic – and, indeed, seemingly inaccurate – accounts of the March in either the student papers or the *Gazette*[346] is a news brief in the *Daily*.

Appearing in 2000, under the headline "Anarchists riot, smash police station and McDonald's,"[347] the piece (which mistakenly asserts that the annual event was organized specifically in light of a decision not to lay charges in the case of Jean-Pierre Lizotte, a homeless person who died as a result of injuries sustained at the hands of a resto-bar bouncer and police) makes collective attributions in describing "protesters" and "the crowd," respectively, "terrorizing any police vehicle that grew near," and "throwing an assortment of bricks, paint bombs, Molotov cocktails, and snowballs." The *Daily* notably refrained from covering the event in 2001 and 2002 (despite 371 people being caught up in mass arrests at the 2002 rally), perhaps reflective of the more 'professional' (and avowedly less 'activist') orientation among senior editors at the time; while the 2003 and 2005 events were overshadowed, respectively, by massive demonstrations against the Iraq War and by major student strikes which occupied the two student newspapers at the expense of the March, the *Link* covered the event in both 2001 and 2002, and both have covered it each year from 2006-2010.

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[346] The Gazette, at least, spoke with a protest participant that year, though the tone of the description of an account given by "Steve," a "self-described anarchist" (along with "self-styled," almost invariably the type of anarchist referenced in mainstream reports of both anti-globalization and anti-police brutality events) sometimes verges on mocking; the piece balances his account with that of a frightened bystander, and closes by stating that "McDonald's called the riot a 'sad' event." See:
   Siblin, Eric. "Got sidetracked: rioter." *Montreal Gazette*, 17/4/2000: A5.
[347] Yap, James. "Anarchists riot, smash police station and McDonald's" *McGill Daily*, 16/3/2000: 5.

Other treatments are by no means one-sided or inclined to ignore (or remain uncritical of) confrontational tactics among demonstrators; they do, however, typically present a different view of the events than is to be found in *Gazette* coverage, frequently including more specific (both in depth and number) accounts of individual protesters' reasons for being there, in addition to those reasons given by organizing groups' representatives. Several accounts in the two papers[348] point to an 'irony' or 'tragic irony' in the situation, and the trope of 'brutality on both sides' or 'violence meets violence' recurs in several pieces, as does the contention that the event polarizes the respective parties, rather than leading to rapprochement. Coverage in the mainstream at times takes up the same refrain. The valence of coverage in the student papers, however, tends at least to remain ambivalent, and supportive of the protests in general (in contrast to *Gazette* treatments which locate the 'irony' in an attribution of hypocrisy on the part of demonstrators). While the student papers are typically wary of the more confrontational aspects of the event, they also present more sustained efforts at contextualizing and understanding the legitimate underpinnings of dissent targeting police brutality, impunity and efforts to criminalize protesters regardless of direct involvement in illegal acts.

In looking at *Link* and *Daily* coverage in contrast to that of the *Gazette*, it is useful to consider some differences that emerge in particular instances where all three papers provide significant coverage. In 2007, for example, it is possible to locate a number of variations in coverage – though the overall picture is by no means unequivocal. The *Gazette*

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[348] E.g. The cover headline for the *Link*, 17/3/2009: "Tragic Irony: annual anti-police brutality demonstration provokes brutality from both sides"; the 'irony,' however, in one 2008 headline ("Police pull out brutality during anti-brutality march"), as in the text of a 2002 editorial which castigated police for instigating a situation in which "hundreds were subjected to police brutality on what was supposed to be a day decrying it" when the SPVM arrested 371 in 2002, testifies to a moral tone more inclined towards solidarity with demonstrators' goals than that identified by Aubin and others. See:

"Police brutality targets powerless." Editorial. *The Link*, 19/2/2002: 11.

article describing the 2007 March is a strangely discordant affair; under the headline "Cops keep cool in face of protesters,"[349] the opening paragraph proceeds as follows:

> Doing their best to bait police, about 400 people stormed through the Cote des Neiges district yesterday evening to protest against police brutality they say has claimed 37 lives in 20 years in Montreal.

The next describes the scene as police "kept their distance" as "people used rocks to break two restaurant signs and ripped down election posters to mark the 11th annual Day Against Police Brutality." Subsequently, it notes that approximately 100 proceeded to the downtown Berri-UQAM metro, where it enumerates the number of vandalism reports cited by a police spokesperson, and the number and type of arrests/charges. Interestingly, the article completely shifts modes mid-way, and the second half is devoted entirely to the case of Mohamed Anas Bennis – a portion that includes statements from Bennis' sister and details of the case that indicate a coverup (or at least a glaring opacity) on the part of police and government. Clearly, this latter part indicates an attempt at 'thematic' news framing (Iyengar 1991), and represents a presentation which is supportive of some aspects of movement participants' intended framing (calling attention to a potentially troubling case of police violence and problematizing investigatory procedures). Indeed, it seems exemplary of how, as Carroll and Hackett (2006) put it, the standards of mainstream journalism offer "openings" in contrast to "conservatizing pressures." Yet the two parts of the article remain seemingly disconnected, and coverage is in stark contrast to that of the *Link* and the *Daily*. In effect, the three accounts present a kind of continuum in how they describe the more disorderly aspects of the event.

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[349] Harrold, Max. "Cops keep cool in face of protesters." *Montreal Gazette*, 16/3/2007: A6.
The story also appeared in the online edition, credited only to "The Gazette," under the headline "Cops refuse to take protesters' bait." See:
http://www.canada.com/montrealgazette/news/story.html?id=a07e7660-92e6-
4b3e-8b7c-d24c7d864513&k=67012

The *Link*, in a full-page article headlined "350 protesters, 15 arrests and one cop telling media to 'buzz off',"[350] is much more attentive to the individuals participating in the March, and presents a decidedly different portrayal of a demonstration that "began calmly near the Snowdon metro station," but "degenerated into chaos with police officers in riot gear chasing round and round after a few dozen protesters near Berri Square." While it describes the same incidents (the tearing down of election signs and destruction of "the infamous golden arches" at a construction site), there is a clear indication that this was undertaken by "a handful" of people, and the writer cites other protesters' opposition to such actions. Still, the writer maintains the narrative identity of "the protesters" as a collective entity which traveled from Cote des Neiges to Berri-UQAM by metro, describing the events at the latter location (by far the majority of property destruction and police-protester confrontation) as "the latter half of the march."

The *Daily* piece covering the same demonstration, by contrast to both the *Gazette* and the *Link*, makes a clear point that the movement of some participants to Berri-UQAM by metro took place "[a]fter the march officially ended at Plamondon metro station." This seems an important detail, in that one of the main problems identified by numerous analyses of protest event coverage (Murdock 1981; Dupuis-Deri 2006; Rosie and Gorringe 2009) is an overt focus on disorder, violence and property destruction, often collectively attributed – obviating distinctions between organizers, the majority of participants, and those who engage in such activity. Surely it is worth noting that organizers and a substantial majority of participants considered the event over (and peacefully left) prior to the actions which occurred near Berri-UQAM;[351] suggesting otherwise seems of a piece with the

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[350] Boudjikanian, Raffy. "350 protesters, 15 arrests and one cop telling media to 'buzz off'." *The Link*, 20/3/2007: 3.

[351] A very similar situation (and one which I can again describe from personal observation) arose in 2009, where the Daily noted that COBP members involved in organizing the March were frustrated by police refusal to allow the demonstration to proceed East on Mount Royal from the Mount Royal

*Gazette*'s description of "about 400 people" in Cote des Neiges "[d]oing their best to bait police." Having personally observed the 2007 March from its beginning until this point (as a participant), I can confirm that COBP members and others clearly and definitively announced the conclusion of the event upon arrival at the metro station, and called upon demonstrators to disperse (recommending that participants depart in small groups, so as to avoid the possibility of mass arrests). The number of people involved in damaging the two McDonald's signs, removing election posters, and breaking the glass in phone booths appeared to be perhaps 10-15, at most, out of a group variously estimated at 350, 400 and 500 participants.

And while the *Link*, too, fails to note this particular fact – and it is important not to ignore the fact that the *Gazette* did give space to dissenting voices by highlighting the Bennis case – coverage of the 2007 March in both student papers also (as is commonly the case across the period of reference) provided a variety of participants' perspectives and information about the event which depicts protesters in a less decidedly negative light. The *Daily*, as noted above, includes mention of supportive onlookers, specifically a group outside a barbershop who cheered and shouted their support as marchers passed by with signs

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metro station where it began (and was immediately declared an "illegal assembly"). With the intended route – selected to discourage property destruction and disorder – blocked, a peaceful march proceeded down St. Denis towards the downtown, and when police blocked all three possible routes for the group of several hundred at the intersection with Sherbrooke, some participants began throwing projectiles, and the group fragmented – with a majority departing and some heading into the downtown core where almost all of a reported $200,000 in property damage (and the arrest of Link reporter Brian Hastie) took place. This point, the Daily makes clear, is precisely where organizers suggest that the demonstration they put together "kind of crashed," and they lost what control they may have had over the group. This particular aspect of the handling of the March was mentioned – in passing – by one of four front-section Gazette articles, which cited only the fact that a COBP representative noted that police directed the march towards downtown against their wishes. See:

Hale, Erin. "Violence meets violence." *McGill Daily*, 19/3/2009: 6;
Block, Irwin and Philip Authier. "Calls to give notice of route rejected." *Montreal Gazette* 17/2/2009: A2.

condemning racial profiling;[352] it also cites representatives from COBP, others and from a group organizing a Women's Day demonstration the previous week at which police violence prompted some feminist organizations to officially join the already-organized March (see below), and a CEGEP student who describes his rationale for participating by relaying a recollection of being shot in the face with a tear gas canister from a distance of less than ten feet (spending two weeks in hospital) at his first political demonstration in Quebec City in 2003.

The *Link* similarly presents personal accounts of police violence (the sub-headline for the story reads "Demonstrators tell stories of brutality against them at the hands of police"), including one furnished by Jesse, a homeless 19-year old whose words are repeated in a 'pull-quote' for the story:

> "I was caught and beaten up badly by police when they tried to stop me and I pushed them to escape. They kept laughing at me and saying I was an idiot to think I could run away."

Two other similar accounts draw attention to the way that police control the movement of those living on the street, and at times act with impunity in the application of force. Another provides the story of a Concordia student who, along with her male partner, was roughed up and charged with assault after Toronto police forced their way into her home after an emergency call seeking help when her clinically depressed companion injured himself with a knife. Such accounts from 'unofficial' protester sources, extending the view of protesters' rationale for participation beyond a single case, the statements of organizers or a general summary of complaints, clearly alter the valence of coverage and give a richer and more diverse account of the event.

In contrast to the 2001 Summit protests, which were marked by an extensive run-up in mainstream media coverage, it is worth noting that across the entire 2000-2010 period,

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[352] From my own recollection, these were not the only supportive onlookers in Cote des Neiges that year.

the *Gazette* did not once mention the event in advance of its occurrence, though the *Daily* has done so in 2004, 2007, 2008 and 2010.[353] The *Daily*, for example, previewed the event in 2007,[354] informing readers of its location, organizers and their rationale for protest; a particular focus was placed on police violence at an International Womens' Day march the previous week, where several women – including McGill Student Emma Strople, interviewed for the piece – were injured by police when some sought to intervene in the arrest (once again) of Jaggi Singh, charged with violating bail conditions barring him from demonstrations which are illegal or violent (though persons present subsequently testified at court hearings for Singh that the march was neither until the intervention of police to arrest him).[355] Such content clearly sets itself apart from mainstream coverage in that it once again furnished 'mobilizing information' which potentially assists organizers in sensitizing the public to their aims and recruiting possible participants, as well as including elements of contextualization absent from accounts presented to *Gazette* readers. Rather than wait for the 'news' (that is, the actual demonstration, which mainstream media were well aware of in advance, dispatching dozens of reporters to its starting-point) to happen, student journalists in these instances were proactive in presenting the demonstration to their readership. Making a point of doing so clearly marks out how student journalists sometimes take up a more 'activist' orientation, if not endorsing the event, then at least providing the opportunity for readers to evaluate organizers claims and potentially participate.

In the same 2007 issue, which came out the morning of the event, the March was also the subject of a strongly supportive editorial (which appeared alongside a regular

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[353] While the Link has not done so from 2000-2010, it did publish a full-page feature, including information on civil rights for demonstrators and focusing on the criminalization of dissent, which previewed a November 1999 protest organized by COBP. See:

  Zucca, Kathy. "Abuse of power." *The Link*, 23/11/1999: 9.

[354] Rosenfeld, Jesse. "Montrealers to march against police brutality." *McGill Daily*, 15/3/2007: 5.

[355] "Activist released on $1,000 bail." *Montreal Gazette*, 14/3/2007: A7.

columnist's condemnation of police actions at the aforementioned International Women's Day march[356]). The editorial suggests that the public record "paints a disturbing picture of a police force that routinely abuses the rights of the citizens it is sworn to protect."[357] The piece cites, alongside the Bennis case and that of the Womens' Day march, a University of Montreal professor's documentation of the "daily criminalization of homelessness and poverty": 22,684 tickets issued to 4,036 homeless persons over the course of a decade (for a total of $8 million), with 2/3 of those persons eventually jailed for non-payment. Such figures, alongside then-new municipal regulations banning people from public parks at night (measures which in the *Daily*'s view merely facilitate more ticketing without addressing "underlying problems"), link the protest to larger social issues, reinforce components of movement-generated frames (highlighting what COBP refers to as "social cleansing"), mobilize academic knowledge on behalf of the demonstrators' cause, and demonstrate a clear commitment on the part of editors to present their efforts in a non-trivial fashion. The editorial further notes the range of concrete options for action available *to supplement public protest aiming at the dissemination of information and analysis,* mentioning the efforts of the Pivot Legal Society in Vancouver and calling for work on legal reform, creating an independent audit process for police complaints, assistance with lawsuits seeking redress for victims of police violence, and making legal information more publically available (all priorities highlighted by COBP).

The particular example of coverage in 2007 exemplifies some of the things that student journalists may do differently to provide a view that supplements, and exceeds, the possibilities for understanding provided by mainstream coverage. While this example demonstrates, for a particular instance, both the efforts of student journalists to contextualize the event (providing more 'thematic' coverage) and to provide a platform for

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[356] Brundson, Denise. "Clubbing women." McGill Daily, 15/3/2007.
[357] "Standing up to police brutality." *McGill Daily*, 15/3/2007.

a diversity of voices as well as potentially important variation in narrative description and the tendency towards collective attribution of confrontation and property damage, the examples from the *Link* and the *Daily* pick up on themes which arise throughout a decade's worth of coverage. Journalists for the two papers consistently present more varied accounts of protester motivations, evading (to some degree) the depiction of a serialized police/protester clash and making links to serious social issues in seeking to spur reader reflection rather than reducing the event to what the *Gazette* editors have called (following the 2009 March, in the course of calling on organizers in future to simply read a prepared statement and call off the demonstration) "an annual testosterone-fuelled match-up between young men looking for action and police stung by criticism."[358]

For example, drawing on the range of allies associated with the annual protest and drawing attention to many concerns not treated in mainstream accounts, the *Daily* in 2008 cites a documented case of undercover police provocateurs at an anti-globalization protest in Montebello, QC in 2007,[359] another piece the same year discusses the harassment, abuse and absence of legal protection for sex workers,[360] a 2010 piece previewing the March calls attention to the disproportionate enforcement of drug laws among working-class communities of color,[361] and a 2006 *Link* story cites a member of the 'Pink Bloc' (an ad hoc group of queer advocates participating) explaining how queer people can suffer from "not only physical violence but terrorism through the lack of accountability and protection."[362]

Noting that the *Daily* covers the event "every year" (though this hadn't been the case earlier in the decade), 2009-2010 editor Stephen Davis suggests that the *Daily*'s coverage is

[358] "Rioters obscure an important debate" Editorial. *Montreal Gazette*, 17/3/2009: A14.
[359] Ebbels, Kelly. "March against police brutality on Sunday." *McGill Daily*, 13/3/2008: 8.
[360] Parker, David. "Police and protesters clash at anti-brutality march." *McGill Daily*, 20/3/2008: 4.
[361] Bishku, Aykul, Jeff. "Montreal North focus of drug enforcement." *McGill Daily*, 15/3/2010: 5.
[362] Abi-Habib, Maria. "Revenge on police with beer bottles and squeegees." *The Link*, 21/3/2006: 4.

oriented by an interest in presenting more than just a retelling of the movements of the protest and a tally of arrests and damages:

> Typically, I have to be careful here, there usually is some measure or violence as part of that protest, and I think the *Daily*, when approaching issues like that...I guess what I would say, with protests, with all our coverage, is that we like to look at things at a systemic level, and we like to look at the causes of things rather than just the things themselves. So if there is a protest where people are acting violently toward police, the mainstream media might pretend to be publishing something objective where they just report on all the facts, everything that happened at that march, including the violence, right? We try to get to a systemic level and think about why this violence is happening, what makes someone want to go out and throw rocks at police officers? We probably all share the belief that there are systemic factors that contribute to anger like that and to violence, and outside of violent protest, there are just factors which force people out onto the streets because they don't have another venue.[363]

Such an approach connects directly with the paper's political mission to act as an 'alternative' to the mainstream, and to provide a platform for those whose voices may not otherwise be heard; it also speaks – though examples cited in Chapter 4 and earlier in this one make clear that those at the *Link* and *Daily* can be equally explicit at times – to Davis' description of media critique in the paper as:

> more implicit than explicit. We define ourselves against the mainstream media, it's essentially just something that I keep in the back of my mind when I'm covering stories or I'm editing, or whatever. [...] I'm not always thinking, 'I'm writing this story to thumb my nose at the *Gazette*,' but I am always writing my story with the idea that I'm trying to offer something different, that I'm trying to offer a deeper understanding of the issues that we're covering.[364]

### "The Link gets arrested": neither professionals nor protesters

Recent arrests of student journalists covering the Annual March Against Police Brutality add another dimension to both the content on the pages of the *Link* and *Daily* and to student journalists' ongoing negotiation of their liminal positioning, one which appears particularly relevant to an annual demonstration in which organizers and participants simultaneously present collective action frames articulating and opposing police oppression of groups such

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[363] Personal interview, February 2010.
[364] Ibid.

as the homeless, street youth and ethnic or racial minorities and enact opposition to the criminalization of dissent by refusing to register a pre-planned route or to refrain from repeating the demonstration each year – thus asserting the importance of the cause in the face of police and public officials' (and indeed, the *Gazette*'s) condemnation of the public disorder which sometimes accompanies it. This 'angle' is the one that emerges when student journalists are caught up in mass arrests at the demonstrations they seek to cover. A 2009 cover story on the March, for example, details the arrest of a *Link* journalist covering the event; coverage the year before recounts the story of a former *Link* editor rounded up enroute from his apartment amid the demonstration's end. Two *Link* writers were arrested again in 2010,[365] as was a *Daily* photographer in 2006.[366]

This situation provides a different 'angle' for stories in that it puts student journalists among those detained – and sometimes mistreated – for being present at the March, and has given rise to secondary narratives (in both news and editorial content) about the place of independent or alternative media (including, but not necessarily limited to, student media) in such scenarios. For Brian Hastie, arrested in 2009, showing his student press credentials to police media relations elicited a laugh: in the officer's words, "everyone wants to be a member of the press when they get caught."[367] Much like the *Link*'s reporter in 2008, who described being struck in the ribs several times with a baton, Hastie notes that his plastic cuffs drew blood, but elicited little sympathy; like others, he received a $144 ticket for unlawful assembly. As Damon Van der Linde, arrested in 2008 (and warned that he faces overnight detention if spotted at another demonstration – recalling legal efforts to prevent activists such as Jaggi Singh[368] from attending protest events, though here without any

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[365] "30 is the new 20." *The Link*, 13/4/2010: 10.
[366] "Open letter to Montreal police." Editorial. *McGill Daily*, 23/3/2006: 11.
[367] Hastie, R. Brian. "The Link gets arrested." *The Link*, 17/3/2009: 4-5.
[368] Only the most prominent case in Montreal radical-left circles, and one which provides a convenient narrative thread through this chapter an beyond; police and prosecutors' efforts to limit

judicial backing), put it, "sometimes people are persecuted not just for what they've done or who they are, but for being in a certain place at a certain time."[369]

The personal account of Van der Linde's arrest and detention (presented as 'news commentary') serves to recast the story and strengthen movement-generated collective action frames which cast police in opposition to dissenting citizens, making arbitrary arrests and acting with impunity in punishing individuals (in this case including the student press) regardless of non-participation in overt criminal behaviour:

> They pushed me into a crowd I assumed was trying to disperse after also being shoved by the police. Instead, I realized we were surrounded by a semi-circle of riot cops, keeping us trapped against the stone wall of a high-end clothing store. There were about 30 of us pushed together, including four tourists from Boston who had arrived only a few hours before and were taking a walk from their hotel in hopes of finding the closest liquor store.
> I tried negotiating with the cops, telling them I was a journalist as I waved my ratty *The Link* press pass. This didn't impress them. I told them they couldn't detain me if they weren't going to arrest me as I tried to just walk through their barricade. All that got me was another shot with the nightstick.

The two stories just noted (as mentioned in Chapter 3) made a recent list of some of the *Link*'s "proudest moments as a paper," (seemingly emphasizing a sense of journalistic pride in being willing to get 'in the middle of a scenario,' for a story, allowing student journalists to better capture protesters' point of view despite the best advice of professionals such as those cited in the *Link*'s special issue previewing the 2001 Quebec City Summit[370]) and provided ample fodder for both papers' editorials at the time. The operation here is interesting in that student journalists assert both distinction from and solidarity with protest participants. A 2009 *Daily* editorial suggests that "independent media deserve the same rights and respect traditional media receive; by arresting members of the media, police deny protesters' rights to have their demonstration covered by a variety of

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his activism are a saga far beyond what has been noted here, stretching from the APEC protests in 1997 to the present day.
[369] Van der Linde, Damon. "The other side of the headline." *The Link*, 18/3/2008: 7.
[370] See page 254.

sources."[371] Refusal, they contend, is analogous to the denial of access to medical assistance, legal counsel and parental contact for minors – all "deplorable actions" on the part of police. Documentation and attribution of relevance to such actions – as emblematic of *why* protesters are there in the first place – comes alongside claims of status-equivalence with 'traditional' media.

Two threads to be disentangled here are a) concern about arrests without specific attribution of responsibility, and b) the assertion that 'independent journalists' should be exempt, as are (de facto, though not legally) the *Gazette*'s and those presenting press credentials from other major media outlets. At a time when anyone can run a blog or upload content, the latter presents a sticky definitional problem. Perhaps the safe conclusion would be to follow the UN's 2005 recommendations that Montreal police ensure only those committing illegal acts are arrested; in any case, the distinction highlights the fact that student journalists both assert themselves as journalists, and are in some respects denied that status – in this case providing a point of view which would not present itself in mainstream coverage. It also connects them with a much larger, and expanding, contingent of 'independent' or 'alternative' media producers or practitioners of 'alternative journalism'.

Ultimately, the coverage presented by the *Link* and the *Daily* connects the two threads noted above – exploiting the commonly held standard of journalistic immunity to emphasize the arbitrariness of indiscriminate detentions – as well as advocating for the recognition of non-professionals, their 'liminally' positioned counterparts – as engaged in work which is in some respects equivalent, and arguably all the more important in that it introduces greater plurality, and potentially better or more sympathetic coverage, as a supplement to 'mainstream' accounts of such events. Thus (in emphasizing the arbitrariness of indiscriminate detentions) dovetailing with another recurrent narrative connecting the

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[371] "Learning from Sunday's violence." Editorial. *McGill Daily*, 19/3/2009: 19.

story of the annual COBP march with police containment and repression at other legitimate political protest actions (harking back to coverage of anti-globalization demos from the turn of the decade onwards), these accounts once again furnish frames for interpreting the COBP march in a light which encourages a more critical view of police handling of the event. The 'angle' introduced by the arrest of student journalists at these events once again foregrounds the tensions inherent in student journalists' liminal positioning, and the tension between 'activist' and 'professional' orientations. While their coverage often seeks to paint a more sympathetic and better-contextualized picture of the controversial March Against Police Brutality, it is clear that student journalists see themselves in a role which, while potentially complementary to or supportive of movement constituents' activist goals and effectively differentiated from 'mainstream' journalism (in large part due the potential corrective student journalists may provide to the latter's alleged failings), is neither that of 'activist' nor 'professional,' but somewhere in between (or something else entirely).

### Conclusions

Bringing the two case studies in this chapter (anti-globalization and anti-police brutality) together, and taking a page from the journalists' playbook in terms of concern with the contemporary, in concluding I could hardly fail to mention the efforts (taking place as I prepare this manuscript for submission) of *Link* and *Daily* journalists to cover substantial demonstrations at the Toronto G20 Summit, June 26-27 2010, an event which recalls the 2001 Quebec City FTAA Summit which occupied much of the early part of this chapter. Both papers – despite the summer break in their publishing cycle – presented accounts from the protests, which attracted an estimated 10,000 on the first of two days of weekend protest and at which over 900 protesters were arrested, most without charge and many having been swept up in mass arrests. Both the *Daily* and *Link*'s websites, as of early

July, are replete with protest coverage that takes up the theme, familiar from the foregoing discussion, of providing protester perspectives (and student journalists' own view from 'the middle of a scenario') in a case where the criminalization of dissent is a major concern for the respective papers and activists alike.

All five front-page stories at www.mgilldaily.com and four out of six at www.thelinknewspaper.ca speak to the recent protest and police response, with both pages cross-posting stories from blogs run by staff members (including one by *Link* editor-in-chief Justin Giovanetti and Lex Gill, which presented an extensive run-down detailing conditions described by protesters as they were slowly being released from detention[372] – and got 30,000 unique hits on the original blog in approximately 24 hours at the time) as well as presenting content produced for their own sites. An online-only 'since 1980' line[373] on the *Link*'s site reads: "getting pulled into unmarked white vans since 1980." Without going into detail, *it is worth noting that among the stories posted to the sites of the two student newspapers are a description of an officially-accredited Daily reporter* – Stephen Davis – being assaulted ("kicked, thrown against a wall, and violently searched by five officers," though ultimately released),[374] follow-up on the original blog/Link article on detentions with a lengthy listing of first-hand accounts from arrestees,[375] and a detailed account of the 'middle of the scenario' as police dispersed peaceful protesters on Sunday the 28th.[376]

Thus, the types of 'alternative' coverage described here, across the period of reference (2000-2010) continue to be produced, and to draw readers' attention to the voices of protesters, and to the excesses of the criminalization of dissent and police violence – against protester and student journalist alike. As I've outlined in this chapter, coverage of anti-

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[372] http://lexgill.com/2010/06/28/urgent-conditions-at-629-eastern-ave-illegal-immoral-dangerous/
[373] See page 113.
[374] http://mcgilldaily.com/articles/31295
[375] http://www.thelinknewspaper.ca/articles/2700
[376] http://mcgilldaily.com/articles/31520

globalization and anti-police brutality protest events has tended – aside from occasionally explicit critiques of mainstream representation – to proceed in a number of ways which may be cast as 'alternative.' The *Link* and *Daily*, in contrast to the *Gazette* (as described in the quantitative content analysis set out at the beginning of the chapter) have tended to represent proportionately more 'protester' sources (due mainly to the inclusion of far fewer 'pro-institutional,' especially 'official pro-institutional' sources), note more specific Social Movement Orgnizations in their coverage, and appear significantly more likely to present coverage which, on balance, may be judged to give readers a view emphasizing a more positive view of protest events and their participants.

Viewed through a closer critical reading of coverage of the run-up to the 2001 Summit of the Americas in Quebec City and the Annual March Against Police Brutality in Montreal, the two student newspapers similarly can be seen to privilege the voices of a range of movement constituents (attending more to movement-generated framing, presenting protesters' non-trivial rationale for participating, and often giving readers a sense of the variety of issues and viewpoints associated with protest) and to *do better journalism* by providing context (more 'thematic framing' and issue-linkage which connects social conditions and power dynamics with the more 'episodic' aspects of events, including the presentation of facts and arguments above and beyond the claims explicitly made by the various contending actors), more diverse representations, and attempts to facilitate understanding of key contentious issues.

Importantly, in light of the dismissive or de-legitimating tendencies of much mainstream protest event coverage of (especially radical) movements and protest events highlighted by so many academic critiques,[377] including with particular reference to the anti-globalization movement, coverage also – at times – seeks to emphasize (challenging a

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[377] As outlined in Chapter 2.

recurrent tendency to make collective attributions related to violence and disorder in the mainstream press) the distinction between organizers, the bulk of participants, and the typically limited number of persons involved in property destruction or confrontation with police, as well as to provide some insight (and possible understanding) of the reasons why those involved in more disorderly or violent aspects of protest might take these kinds of action. Concomitantly, a recurrent concern to present accounts of police violence, and consider these protest events through framing which problematizes what is often described as the criminalization of dissent, can be located in both the *Link* and *Daily*'s coverage.

Still, the positioning of student journalists in covering these paroxysmal moments in the symbolic struggles that are an essential part of social movements and activism (and where movement-generated framing of events and mainstream news framing are often in an antagonistic relationship) displays some tension between more 'professional' and 'activist' orientations – as for example (at the point of rupture), in the example provided by Nestruck from Quebec City, or more (contemplative than decisive), in Cuppage's article in the PUIQ special issue. It is once again clear – for example in the *Link*'s editorial describing both how 'mainstream media burns protesters' and how protesters need to better package their cause – that most student journalists involved see themselves in opposition to the mainstream, but still seek to assert their own autonomous existence as ('alternative') journalists, refracting rather than simply amplifying or giving space to movement constituents and activists (though among the variety of types of content deployed to present the movements and events examined, other thant 'straight news' and the standard editorial, verbatim interviews were sometimes used to let activists usually kept to a line or two in mainstream reports present their take on contentious events and issues). In the following conclusion, I seek to present, via a synthesis of the foregoing chapters, how the particular liminal positioning of student journalists at the *Link* and *Daily* can be best characterized.

## Conclusions

## The Link and the McGill Daily:
## Hybrid/alternative media in the margins of the journalistic field


I began with the question of what is it to do journalism, to report (and comment on) the news, at Concordia's the *Link* and the *McGill Daily*. Ultimately, the central problem or question which has guided this thesis through the main themes outlined in the introduction is how student journalists maintain and negotiate an (often distinctly primary) identification with journalism (and, to a greater or lesser degree, with a more 'professional' orientation concerned with maintaining distance and 'balance,' if not objectivity – though 'mainstream' or 'professional' practices are often explicitly contested) at the same time that they seek to pursue a political mission and position themselves as 'alternative,' often taking up a marked 'activist' orientation and aligning themselves with, or seeking to better portray, social movements and activism (as in the cases of anti-globalization and anti-police brutality protest, the examples related to student protest in Chapter 4, or indeed, in a sense, in the movement against CanWest's impositions on journalists ca. 2002). The *Link* and the *McGill Daily*, as reflected through the range of citations, cases and thematic explorations (drawing on material from their own pages and the interviews with editors from the 2000-2010 period) which have constituted the body of this thesis, present many facets which merit consideration as *alternative(s)* to the mainstream.

Student journalism at the *Link* and *McGill Daily* continues to keep alive something of the ethos of a student press which has in the past envisioned itself as a press with a distinctly political mission (in revealing power and contesting hierarchy and oppression), and many student journalists at these papers still draw on the critiques of 'objectivity' and ideology of engagement and opposition which emerged in an era when CUP cast itself an 'agent of social

change' (Lemon 2004). Identifying with their own publications' past involvement with social movements and activism (though not always without ambivalence), the respective papers – and, on occasion, their alumni – have at times presented themselves as part of a tradition which seeks to be at the forefront of struggles for social justice. For the *Link* and *Daily*, this is notably the case in many of their efforts and interventions within CUP; it is also frequently the basis of their positioning relative to a 'mainstream' media against which they explicitly define themselves in their guiding documents, on their own pages, and in the personal reflections of many editors.

Within the wider journalistic field, the *Link* and the *Daily* can be seen to position themselves (and to act) as alternatives to the mainstream (corporate) press. As I've sought to emphasize, however, the distinction between 'alternative' and 'mainstream' media is not as clear-cut as some might have it; the "persistence, hybridity, and commonality" of communications in a given era indicated by Hamilton (2008: 4) play out with respect to student journalism in that the endeavor of staff at the two papers is precisely a *journalistic* one, identified with and drawing on standards common to the wider field of journalism (dominated, to a large extent, by the mainstream). Unlike professional journalists, writers and editors at the *Link* and *Daily* cannot count on their de facto inclusion in an "occupational group defined principally as those who have worked in newsrooms of recognized print and broadcast media" (Hartley 2000: 40) to vouchsafe their claims to a journalistic identity and practice. They do nonetheless (by virtue of their journalistic practice, presumably based on prior socialization which invests that practice with value, and their share in the common *illusio* of the journalistic field and, potentially, in light of their position as prospective entrants to that professional domain) seek to define themselves into the 'interpretive community' (Zelizer 1993) of journalism – that is, to assert, through writing, editing and publishing, a place in the wider field of journalism. Thus, critique emanating from the

respective papers often couches itself in terms of an articulation of what 'good journalism' might be, challenging mainstream journalism on familiar territory.

By the nature of their enterprise – reporting and commenting on the news for the university community, articulating and connecting that 'imagined' community (and ultimately, actual readers) with others who share the wider social context in which it is embedded or with which it shares locality, as well as acquainting it with its own constituent elements – student journalists share in the dilemmas (and seek to adhere, in variable fashion, to standards and ideals) associated with journalism writ large. Still, their position within the field of journalism is somewhat marginal – or 'liminal,' unsettled and subject to a configuration of influences and possibilities different from the more established actors and outlets arrayed in the mainstream news media. In a sense, all (news) media occupy a 'liminal' position in that the fundamental role of the field of journalism is precisely the public mediation of other fields; still, I employ the term here to stand in for something more specific. This 'liminal' status, in the case of student journalists, indicates both their relatively marginal position in the journalistic field, and their relative proximity or adjacency to other fields (such as those of activism and the academy), which tend to have less impact on mainstream outlets.

Given institutional arrangements and priorities – e.g. independent non-profit status and reliance on student fee-levies and volunteer labour for much of their resources – under which the papers are less prone to influence from what Bourdieu terms the 'field of power' (oriented towards powerful political and economic forces, a field to which mainstream media is deeply connected through ownership, reliance on advertising and integration into the liberal order), student journalists, at least potentially, have a great deal of autonomy. On one hand, this may place them, relative to the wider journalistic field, in a position where they are more free to innovate (and to take up positions critical of mainstream

counterparts); on the other, it places them in a different configuration of influences, one in which they may face serious challenge from groups such as student unions or on-campus activists (as in the case of the *Link*'s crisis 2000-2001), or, conversely, may be influenced by and/or align themselves – most pertinently for the argument of this thesis – with social movements and activism on-campus and off.

Despite the fact that, in Bourdieu's terms, the relatively marginal position of student journalists translates to a relative poverty in the various capitals, it is perhaps an ambiguity (or a revealing paradox) of the model which casts actors as competing for positioning and the accumulation of these capitals that those who occupy such as position may be considered (collectively, and to some extent, individually) more autonomous than many of their professional counterparts in mainstream media. Student journalists are relatively 'poor' in economic capital (most, by interviewees accounts, can barely make ends meet, spending dozens of hours a week on the newspaper in addition to their studies, for only a small editors' stipend) and symbolic capital (the accumulated honor, prestige or recognition associated with work in producing a student newspaper is very limited compared to that which may accrue to prominent journalists in mainstream media), as well as social capital (at least insofar as student journalists typically lack the kinds of social ties to powerful actors in the political and other fields which might accrue to prominent professionals, though they do typically acquire a certain 'local' social capital through ties to the student politicians, activists and other sources of news within the university community). Yet the relative absence of pressures or influence that would be necessitated by the maintenance of those very capitals (pleasing an employer and sustaining the commercial exigencies of the 'news industry,' cultivating powerful sources, playing to public and peer expectations and effectively integrating into the liberal order) is precisely what allows student journalists to challenge both the conventions and representations of mainstream journalism (should they

wish) and to seek to contest (whether via their own independent efforts or in alignment with social movement constituents or activists on various issues) the operations of power and hierarchy in the wider social order.

Indeed, with this relative surfeit of autonomy (and having been less fully socialized into the standards and practices typical in the mainstream), student journalists may potentially be more free to pursue some of the 'specific' cultural capitals unique to the journalistic field, seeking to bolster 'straight reporting' with *insight, originality, interpretation*[378] and furnish the kind of 'thematic' framing of issues (Iyengar 1991) which better facilitates an idealized role in serving not just the 'public interest,' but in attending to a plurality of other voices and interests, especially those in less powerful social positions. In short, the particular liminal (and relatively marginal) positioning of student journalists – which both translates into, and, in a sense, arises from a relative poverty in these various capitals – is what makes the student press, in 2009-2010 Link editor-in-chief Terrine Friday's words, the "one place where you have the most amount of freedom when it comes to the press."

As neither amateurs nor professionals and neither staid 'mainstream' press (tending to gravitate more closely to conventions of 'balance' and ostensive 'political neutrality', though not necessarily averse to mounting 'campaigns' on a given issue in the 'public interest') nor mouthpieces for social movements (though often appearing very interested in presenting movement issues and voices in a positive light), staff at the *Link* and *Daily* are left negotiating their own particular liminal positioning – for present purposes, particularly the recurrent tension between 'professional' and 'activist' orientations – without a well-established base of experience, authority or individual continuity and (all the more so given high turnover) in ways which vary over time and according to circumstance. Often, student journalists are explicit in invoking a political mission, or 'activist' identity, for their papers

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[378] Ideals, however abstract, from past surveys of professional journalists and editors summarized by Shapiro (2010).

and themselves – and many seek to justify and articulate this via a critical stance towards those conventions just mentioned which are associated with 'regimes of objectivity' (Hackett and Zhao 1998). Yet, as indicated – and reinforced by much of the discussion throughout this thesis – staff at the *Link* and the *Daily* (typically, at least, those holding editorial positions with whom I spoke and who invest the most time and effort in the publications) do identify strongly as journalists. While an explicit critique of mainstream journalisms' perceived failures in presenting a 'shallow' objectivity or an 'image' of balance, in not always focusing on stories that matter most (conversely, pursuing trivial scandals as 'news'), or in presenting specific coverage (e.g. of some protest events) which unfairly represents its subjects and hinders the efforts of legitimate social movements, and an implicit one by which the *Link* and *Daily* seek to cover different stories (and to cover them differently, including in the case of protest coverage) are essential to their positioning as 'alternative' or 'independent' (and at times, as in the case of protest events, in taking up a more 'activist' orientation), student journalists will often tend to prioritize their identification precisely as *journalists*.

At times when the student press is challenged on its 'bias' or 'lack of objectivity,' staff may choose, as they often have (see Chapter 5, especially), to reiterate a critique harking back to the 'declared bias' approach employed by some student journalists beginning in the 1960s – "amazed that the old trope of journalistic objectivity is still being tossed around, as if the media has ever been anything but biased," and holding that a biased media is "very useful, but it is only ethical when there is no effort to conceal it."[379] At others, where the challenge is more serious (as in the case of the *Link*'s crisis 2000-2001), student journalists may be more inclined to seek to refute the allegations of bias and invoke (while more quietly maintaining the subjective nature of journalistic practice) the 'fairness' of their own

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[379] Nestruck, Kelly. "Biased, a Little Slanderous, and Proud of It." *McGill Daily*, 13/3/2003.

coverage, the need for certain journalistic standards which cannot be transgressed (e.g. avoiding 'conflict of interest'), and the inviolable autonomy – in the name of the 'public interest' – enshrined in the overarching value of 'freedom of the press.'

In instances where an 'activist' orientation is seen to erode journalistic standards associated with a more 'professional' orientation, as it was by those involved in the phase of transition and 'professionalization' which carried over to the early part of the period of reference (or at the 2001 Summit of the Americas, where Nestruck recalls one fellow CUP journalist's behaviour as forcing a decision between activist and journalistic identifications), a primary identification as journalists can be presented as conferring credibility, relevance, and intellectual rigor in opposition to an allegedly shallow and doctrinaire, overly subjective and emotional, or, alternately, particularistic and partisan, 'activism.' Even in the case of historical retrospectives where, for example, the *Link* recounts the important role of its predecessor, the *Georgian*, in the 1969 SGW affair (coverage of which, though not without reservations about the property damage, asserts the ongoing importance of this key protest event in Concordia's history and that of the paper), the problem of lost credibility and institutional turmoil is highlighted when the '*Link* angle' is mentioned – calling into question the decision of editor Charles Bowman to hand over control of the issue to the West Indian Student Society (though also seeming to revel in the controversy which brought RCMP to the paper's door and pitted staff – and CUP – against student union officials).

The very effort to mark out 'alternative' positioning, playing out tensions between 'activist' and 'professional' orientations, though also at times making clear some of the 'openings' offered by ideals and standards, such as the 'watchdog' role or commitments to pursue issues of concern in the name of 'public service' and to facilitate visibility for and understanding of marginalized or underrepresented voices, which have long traditions in

the wider field of journalism, is inevitably relational. In the case of student journalism, it is, as I have sought to do throughout this work, most productive to think critically through particular interventions in which some have sought either to directly challenge the mainstream (though not as a monolithic entity, but rather as a place of 'openings' and 'conservatizing pressures' or as a particular set of conditions for the operation of a contested craft), to define and present their own publications through retrospective accounts and discussions of journalistic standards and ideals, through cases in which tensions between 'activist' and 'professional' orientations have come to a head, or where papers such as the *Link* and *Daily* have sought to provide coverage (e.g. of movements and protest events) which furnishes a better platform on which readers can come to understand the concerns raised those who seek to describe and challenge the injustice contained in the operations of social systems of power/hierarchy.

By contesting economic and political influences which may limit the autonomy and render precarious the working conditions of professional journalists (thus potentially eroding the quality and diversity of journalism produced – as discussed in Chapter 4), coverage and comment in the *Link* and the *Daily* make clear that student journalists often lament, and may seek (insofar as they can) to intervene in, the affairs of mainstream outlets which they see to operate with less than the highest of standards. Importantly, the particular case of the *Link* and *Daily*'s coverage of CanWest (for example) highlights the dynamic under which Gasher's (2005) contention that the 'news industry' (with its profit imperatives, concentration, convergence, rationalization and the occasional meddling owner) is to be disambiguated from the craft of 'journalism.' While the former requires the latter, and furnishes the institutional trappings under which much journalism takes place, many of the problems of mainstream media are primarily due to the news industry's impositions, which constrain journalistic practice and impede pursuit of ideals which are

not necessarily pursued with vigor by established day-to-day practice in the mainstream. Indeed, this case effectively represents the efforts of student practitioners to draw on sources from the professional and academic fields to (re-)define journalism as a public good in contrast to corporate interests who insist that, as *Gazette* Publisher Larry Smith puts it "he who writes the cheque has the last call."[380]

Ultimately, this case has a central place in my larger argument – one which is repeatedly reinforced by evidence that while many student journalist may conceive of their practices and products as a form or a venue for activism or advocacy, student journalists appeal to standards which would have no place in 'movement media' which seeks to diffuse activist messages directly (though activists, and those presenting a range of opinions across the political spectrum and on various sides of many particular issues, have generally been able to fulfil this function through the comment sections of the respective papers, reserved as a 'forum' for diverse opinions). In cases, as noted above in connection with the *Link*'s crisis of 2000-2001, where student journalists are sharply challenged, it is the ideal of the 'free press' and the tacit implication that (student) journalists, a largely self-defined group sanctioned by participation and the support of other participants,[381] are best qualified to run it (an implication which follows alongside the assertion that contested coverage is in the 'public interest,' or that of the 'university community,' is fair or balanced, or betrays no purely subjective political bias or motive which cannot be effectively justified against challengers on those principles) which are defensively invoked.

The *Link*'s efforts at self-defense on their own pages refuse the contention that the paper 'owes' student groups positive coverage, but the line which is ultimately drawn with regard to what the media (including student newspapers) 'owes' those it represents (or

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[380] See footnote no. 139, pp. 143-144.
[381] That is, only those who participate by making X contributions are sanctioned as staff, and those among staff eith both the time and necessary support within that circumscribed group are sanctioned as editors in elections.

doesn't) is still part of a larger struggle – in microcosmic form, the struggle referred to by Bourdieu as that to influence or control "the means of legitimate manipulation of the vision of the world" (2005: 35). In deciding to bar a contributor from submitting stories based on 'conflict of interest' concerns, editors underlined a journalistic standard which is often loosely upheld in the student press, where, as editor Steve Faguy points out,[382] many contributors covering protests or other events do so in part because they personally sympathize with a particular cause – a likely scenario at an enterprise dependent on volunteers, and with a sometimes self-avowed reputation as an 'activist paper.' This decision, and the crisis it played into as activists (and an activist student union) sought to contest the right of the editorial board to make these and other judgments, highlights, as one editor put it, that "what the activists never understood" was that "we [student journalists] couldn't be them." Nor, indeed, were they – the student journalists on the editorial board – willing to relinquish their journalistic standards or control over the paper.

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Accounts such as Josh Cuppage's article (in the PUIQ special issue covering the 2001 Quebec City Summit) presenting the question of whether 'alternative' journalists covering the Summit were really activists or journalists (appearing under a headline suggesting that they are "on side with protesters") or the *Link*'s subsequent editorial addressing how "mainstream media burn protesters" (and how protesters might better package their cause for media consumption) make clear that it is important to many student journalists to be neither 'mainstream' journalists nor activists, but to stake out a position as something else, something that may incorporate elements of both, but which still refracts the influence, actions and messages of activists through a journalistic prism.

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[382] See page 206.

These and other accounts in which student journalists articulate their particular liminal positioning in the context of the 2001 Summit further indicate, along with the 'angle' afforded by the arrest of student journalists covering the Annual March Against Police Brutality in recent years, insofar as it emphasizes student journalists' insistence that they (and other 'independent' or 'alternative' media) are engaged in work that deserves a certain equivalence with that of professionals, and which is all the more important in that it offers alternative(s) to the mainstream, that rather than a strict division between 'mainstream' and 'alternative' media, there may be seen to exist a "continuum of journalistic practice" which spans the two (Harcup 2005).

Protest coverage represents an acute intersection between journalism and activism; the *Link* and *Daily*'s efforts to present social movements, activism and protest represent cases in which the negotiation of tensions inherent in such a continuum of practice is potentially fluid and significant both for practitioners and the journalistic products produced. Of course, the significance of the latter – and more generally, the value of what is 'alternative' in particular writing produced at hybrid/alternative outlets such as the *Link* and *Daily*,[383] is relative to another entity which I do not discuss in depth here: the public (in this case, the 'university community,' insofar as students actually read their student paper). Ultimately, as I sought to elaborate through examination of the theoretical background for this project in Chapter 2, social movements, activism and protest are to a significant extent symbolic struggles, struggles to articulate and diffuse 'collective action frames' (Snow and Benford 1992) and mobilize potential constituents – or to alter or make some incursion on "the legitimate means of manipulating the vision of the world." Given the problems many scholars have pointed out, with particular respect to movements such as anti-globalization,

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[383] That is, as I've indicated all along, outlets which can neither be classified as neatly 'mainstream' nor 'alternative' in their approach, which are produced by neither established professionals working under the constraints imposed by the 'news industry' nor by activists simply seeking to promote a movement or cause.

in the coverage granted to protest events (and radical movements more generally), it is clear that options other than the mainstream corporate press can be essential to better representing a diversity of voices of dissent, and to effectively contextualizing their struggles, for wider publics.

Furthermore, it is my contention that the availability of sympathetic coverage which maintains some modicum of journalistic 'distance' is potentially valuable to movements, as the negotiation between more 'professional' orientations (or journalistic conventions) and more 'activist' (or alternative) positioning might, at its best, generate stories which facilitate reader understanding in ways that may further the progress of social movements in ways that direct communications (which may be seen as instrumentally-oriented publicity, arousing cynicism, or which tend towards language and presentation which is overly rooted in movement (sub)cultures unfamiliar or inaccessible for many) might not – reaching elements of those publics who might otherwise be resistant to movement messages. In essence, at its best, student journalism may seek to eschew those "undemocratic measures of success" which Hamilton (2008: 4) problematizes in (movement) media: "how many people did we get to believe what we wanted them to?" (Hamilton 2008: 4). Student journalism, by virtue of its particular liminal positioning, can be a site where the 'openings' for progressive social change and pluralism presented in the wider field of journalism can be creatively explored; therein lies their value and vitality.

In examining the normative orientations and ideals of student journalists at the *Link* and *Daily* 2000-2010, 'journalism' emerges as a potential signifier for some very high-minded ideals: it is an imperative to seek and present understanding (not a 'shallow' balance or an image of objectivity), to act as 'watchdog' (monitoring and investigating the sites of power), to provide a platform for the 'voiceless' who might not otherwise be heard; it is often described in terms not incompatible with an 'activist' orientation which seeks to politicize

stories, elaborate systemic analyses and challenge the status quo. There is always some

tension between more 'activist' and more 'professional' orientations; the way the political

mission of the papers is expressed is always up to interpretation, and the emphasis and

articulation of such orientations shift over time. 'Professionalism' tends to be associated

with political ambivalence (if not neutrality, at least a greater distance on the part of the

journalist and a 'big tent' ethos), whereas 'activism' asserts an imperative to 'give a boost' to

social movement constituents and exercise a stronger political voice. Yet, I wish to suggest,

the tension between these two can be a productive tension, if also a problematic one in

situations where it comes to the point of rupture. The positioning of individuals and media

outlets in relation to such tensions, as I've also suggested, may be seen to present the

possibility of a continuum of journalistic practice (from 'mainstream' to 'alternative'). One

question that requires further exploration, however, is that of the social conditions

conducive to practice which maintains 'openings' against 'conservatizing pressures,' or

which remains effectively liminal, supple and undecided.

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Having discussed the themes which oriented this work (and outlined my central

argument), through a critical reading which draws extensively on content, interviews and

events from the period of reference (2000-2010) at the *Daily* and *Link*, I will now venture a

few speculative hypotheses which speak to the particular liminal positioning of student

journalism (and journalists) at the respective publications, to the unsettled (and potentially

vital) nature of the journalism practices there – that is, to potential innovation, political

inflection, and critical (or 'alternative') inclination. That the tensions described exist, and

define much of the work and the events described thus far, at the *Link* and *Daily*, I think, has

been established. As I have proposed, these tensions may in effect be potentially productive

ones, as student journalistis stake out positions which seek to bridge and combine concerns from both wider journalistic and activist fields.

Still, looking at the bigger picture, one might ask: why is this the case? Why are questions which for other publications might be more settled (are we journalists, activists, both, or something else?) unsettled – and, indeed, subject to significant shifts in the orientation of the answers generally offered by writers and editors – at the *Link* and *Daily*, or for student journalism more generally?

It strikes me as likely that the answer to this question (which I do not claim definitively to answer here, merely to point at more general dynamics which could guide future research) is complex, drawing together consideration of the place of youth (and of students) in society, the notion or ideology (perhaps less current than it once was, but nonetheless persistent) of the university as a place where the individual learns to be a citizen (or, indeed, an 'agent of social change'), the particular histories and persistent (if variable) identification of both the *Link* and the *Daily* as 'activist' or 'lefty' papers, the relative ease of participation in student journalism (and the relative absence of top-down control) for a diverse group of students[384] coming from different disciplines and backgrounds, and the relative absence (due to non-profit institutional arrangements predicated on funding via student fee-levies and volunteer, or below-minimum-wage labour) of immediate influence from the economic field, or (because the papers occupy a relatively marginal position

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[384] Though it is well worth noting that particular Faculties, predominantly the Social Sciences and Humanities (as well, of course, as the School of Journalism at Concordia), appear to furnish most writers and editors, and that participation appears more likely among relatively privileged white students – an issue that several editors discussed in interviews, noting that efforts at outreach to campus groups could be effective in gathering material for a 'special issue' or occasional comment, it is persistently difficulty to effectively diversify the student newsroom. Still, the barriers to participation posed by the institution itself (though class- and backround-associated markers such as skill in appropriate genres of writing – or available leisure time – are notable constraints) are much less than at a professional level.

relative to the wider field of journalism, or indeed, their overall public influence) of powerful political interests.

Student journalists' particular liminal position is all the more marked in that they potentially represent 'new entrants' into the field of (professional) journalism (possibly introducing some dynamism into the wider field), though many do not become professionals, some no doubt in part due to changes in the news industry, others because that was never their intention. Many become lawyers,[385] or take on roles with political parties or advocacy organizations, or pursue academic careers; these four options overwhelmingly account for the majority of those interviewed who were not professional journalists, and by their accounts, for many other former colleagues as well (a number of whom pursued such options after working as journalists and finding the 'news industry' unsatisfying or poorly-paid). It seems that those attracted to editorial positions at the *Link* and *Daily* are often individuals exploring possibilities for engagement and public action in roles where they hope to promote social justice and have a positive effect on the world (rather than striving for strictly material gain). Precisely the fact that they are not established as journalists, that they have been neither firmly socialized into the standards of the wider field or 'interpretive community' of journalism nor subject to the economic and political pressures exerted over journalistic practice in the 'news industry' (this latter, as noted, a function of institutional arrangements), leaves the door open for student journalists to, on one hand, pursue the 'specific cultural capital' and higher ideals of

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[385] As one former Link editor put it:

> For me, I went into journalism to kind of effect change, and I think that you realize very quickly in journalism that that's not true, that you can't really effect change in a meaningful way...or it feels that way at least. So I think the next logical step is to go into law where you know, you see results, you do things, you make things happen. And you can kind of do it in the same vein, or for the same reasons. I think it's the same skill-set. What do you do? You have to be able to interview, to communicate properly, to write well, to research. [.,.] I think it's an easy transition.

journalism with less constraint than professionals, and, on the other, to bend (or insist upon) certain standards as they (collectively) see fit, taking the opportunity to experiment and articulate their own brand of journalism.

Whether or not professional journalism emerges as a career path for particular individuals, a significant role (e.g as an editor or regular contributor) with the *Link* or the *Daily* furnishes a kind of de facto critical education in journalism (for journalism- and non-journalism students alike); indeed, it may also furnish an education in activism, as suggested by three different former *Link* editors interviewed (ca. 2002, 2003 and 2004, respectively),[386] all of whom described themselves (having joined the paper largely in connection with formal journalism training) as undergoing a significant change in personal politics and/or sensitization to critical and activist perspectives due to their involvement with the paper. More broadly, as 2009-2010 *Link* editor Terrine Friday puts it, the process of negotiating the tensions and difficulties of student journalism (as ideally would be the case for journalism at large) shape one into "a critical thinker [...] someone who is able to take information, and siphon off the really pertinent data and assess it, in words, in a way that people can understand, and decipher that to the public."[387]

Posed as more of a conundrum than a one-sidedly positive transformative or educational experience, Ariel Troster notes that, despite perhaps being treated with less gravity by some, the dilemmas inherent in student journalism are no less real than those of professionals, as became clear at the *Link* 2000-2001:

> I think that there is a tendency to kind of dismiss student journalism, or to dismiss students' experiences as somehow being not real, or less worthwhile, or juvenile. [...] I feel like the conflicts that were happening on campus at the time actually had a profound impact on a whole cohort of people's university experiences, and that's no small thing. I felt the weight of responsibility when I was at the student newspaper to try to expose what was going on. But I have to say, I

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[386] Confidential source. Telephone interview, January 2010.
    Confidential source. Personal interview, February 2010.
    Confidential source. Personal interview, February 2010.
[387] Friday, Terrine. Personal interview, April 2010.

had this sort of idealistic vision of what journalism, or student journalism, could do – but what j-school wasn't good at teaching us was about real interactions with audiences. When your stories have real impacts on real people, you're going to have real interactions with them if they're unhappy with something you've written.[388]

While I have focused more on what student journalists have had to say, and how this presentss their particular liminal positioning relative to the mainstream in the wider field of journalism (and adjacent fields, especially that of activism) and less on the institutional conditions of student journalism as such, I must emphasize that the relative freedom offered by funding which relies in large part on student fee levies (therefore providing some freedom from reliance on advertising) is a key basis of the relative autonomy and unique positioning which provides the potential for a vital student journalism. As one former *Daily* editor (ca. 2005) put it:

[W]hat allows the student media to be alternative, or different from the mainstream media, is not having the same kind of funding pressure [...] so long as that's the case, whether it's taken advantage of or not, the space for experimentation and some kind of political form of audaciousness is still there.[389]

As Harcup (2003: 370) notes, alternative media projects tend to be "short-lived – a fate they share with many commercial media projects, incidentally – and under-capitalized." Student newspapers like the *Link* and *Daily* have – if not without some challenges – weathered decades (in the *Daily*'s case, a century next year). Of course, they have not always vied for 'alternative' positioning (the *Daily*, for example, having once been more of a source for campus sporting news, administration announcements and club events); nor is the prevalence of a politicizing and progressive ethos necessarily one which will persist (though it does seem likely). Still, as well as providing a (thus-far) durable institutional shell for students interested in navigating a potentially 'alternative' or hybrid/alternative journalism, the fact that students graduate and are replaced in their positions is another source of potential dynamism, and avoids the tendency in many other alternative media

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[388] Troster, Ariel. Telephone interview, March 2010.
[389] Confidential source. Telephone interview, February 2010.

projects of the "self-exploited" workforce to 'burn out' or gravitate towards more sustainable lifestyles and labours at the expense of these projects (Atton and Hamilton 2008: 50). Those at the *Link* and *Daily*, as much as those engaged in the alternative media projects described by Atton and Hamilton (2008), may well participate in light of the fact that "[t]he safety net of family finances and the absence of responsibilities of property ownership, a career or a family of their own combine to free many young people to embark on projects out of commitment or enthusiasm, rather than out of a search for economic security" (ibid: 51), though they may also participate by virtue of the social opportunities and potential professional training student newspapers also afford. In any case, they will also make way for new students, and for future instantiations of their respective publications; the future of student newspapers, is, as it were, a story yet to be written.

### *Only a beginning: limitations and future directions for research*

Having concluded the main thrust of this thesis, I wish finally to leave the reader with some considerations which acknowledge the limited scope and room for further elaboration which this initial foray – as a contribution to a notably under-researched area of contemporary (alternative) media – leaves open. This project, of course, is subject to a number of limitations. It is never my intention to suggest that the positions espoused in particular articles, or by individual editors interviewed (even though these do indeed appear to indicate certain continuities), are representative of all content, or of all participants in student journalism at the *Link* and *Daily*. The focus placed on editors, exclusive in the case of interviews (almost entirely conducted with coordinating, in-chief, or news editors) and still emphatic in the selection of content (with a noticeable focus in case studies on editorials and comment by editors), implies that only a small portion of those involved with the respective papers are predominantly represented here. Even within that

group, the exigencies of writing (notably, my attempt to limit myself to a selection of topics and cases most pertinent to the complex of themes outlined from the introduction onwards and the inevitable limitations of space) and a limited number of interviews ensure that the account produced here is necessarily incomplete.

Within the range of data (both interview responses and content from the papers) that I was able to survey in my research, I have had to pick up and pursue threads which appeared pertinent and provided sufficient opportunity for elaboration. As a result, much has been left out – including a number of compelling examples that would have furthered the pursuit of the thematic ends which have been my focus. In a longer study, I would surely have had to further address the student movement in Quebec (notably the 2005 strike alluded to in Chapter 5, and general concerns about the corporatization of the university), the question of the institutional status of the *McGill Daily* amid the newly instituted fee-levy ratification referenda (noted in Chapter 3), the range of more immediately campus-based campaigns associated with some of the concerns raised by anti-globalization movements (e.g. struggles against advertising on campus, against corporate cafeterias, and for environmentally-sustainable and internationally-aware practices), and concerns related to the place of student newspapers as training for careers in professional journalism. Sociologically-speaking, though it was not expedient at this stage,[390] it would also have been interesting and useful to have been able to consider the personal and socio-demographic characteristics of student journalists relative to their journalistic orientations (e.g. their program of study, class and cultural background, etc.). Such additional research could well provide an opportunity to expand more on some of considerations raised at the end of the previous section of this conclusion. On another front, in seeking to define what might be

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[390] My experience being that student journalists I spoke to were understandably much more willing to discuss their projects and journalistic orientations than personal details, and given the fact that I lacked the resources for the kind of survey research which would potentially yield significant results on this front.

viewed as 'alternative' about the *Link* and the *Daily*, it would have added significant depth to have been able to more systematically compare the papers with such mainstream examples as the *Gazette* (or with the accounts offered by other 'alternative' media); however, given the time available for research and my primary focus on the student papers, I considered it more valuable (as well as more expedient) to address their relative positioning via examples such as those in Chapter 4, the exploratory study presented at the beginning of Chapter 6, and some of the more general comparative comments which follow in the latter.

Ultimately, the breadth of the discussion here elides some detail, and the focus on particular themes and cases elides many significant events; particular cases could have been subject to more in-depth scrutiny (several would have furnished material sufficient for an entire thesis). Still, it strikes me as valuable to maintain a wide scope in addressing a subject barely addressed in past scholarship, and necessary to give some context (as I seek to particularly in Chapter 3) in presenting two publications for which no written history exists outside of their own pages. The often-detailed treatment of specific cases, and citation of writers and interviewees (often a some length) in turn illustrate the terms and tone in which issues such as the coverage of protest, defense against critics, appeal to 'activist' and/or 'professional' orientations, positioning vis-à-vis mainstream media and journalism, and the history and self-presentation of the *Link* and *Daily* have been dealt with by those papers' staff in the past decade.

Looking to the future, a number of directions for research into the student press present themselves. As I've just suggested, even in the circumscribed context of the period of reference and the two specific publications addressed here, any number of detailed case studies await an interested researcher; looking more broadly to the variety of publications which exist (even only in Quebec or Canada), this number expands exponentially. While my main interest lies in those, like the *Link* and *Daily*, which carry on (in various permutations,

and to varying extents) the ethos of a student press as 'agent of social change,' those papers which tend to shy away from such a role may present equally compelling studies (particularly regarding the power and differential negotiation of the dominant 'professional' orientations to journalism). Survey research of the type conducted by Prtitchard and Sauvageau (2005), or in the variety of examples presented by Shapiro (2010) – which seek to construct and/or rank ideal-type priorities or ideals among working journalists, such as their commitments to timeliness, monitoring the centres of power, etc. – would be an invaluable means of extending the examination of normative orientations, allowing a more general view of a large number of student journalists (and permit comparison between publications, and between students and professionals). As far as I know, such research has never been conducted in the student press.

The application of a variety of research methods, not only surveys, but detailed content analyses (perhaps extending the work outlined in the exploratory study I discuss in Chapter 6, or pertaining to the appearance of prescriptive statements or other discursive elements) or frame analysis (for example, comparing the framing of different protest events, or systematically comparing mainstream and student coverage) could usefully extend consideration of the themes expounded upon here. Aside from the survey research I propose above, the two elements of a possible research program which I myself had most seriously considered – and continue to believe would most enrich understanding of how student journalists conceptualize their role, and how tensions between 'professional' and 'activist' orientations are negotiated – would be 1) the facilitation of focus groups which bring together either a group which consistently works together at a given publication (e.g. a number of staff from a particular year), a selection of editors from different years, or a group representing two publications (with the latter two potentially providing grist for comparative work), and 2) ethnographic research (i.e. participant-observation) in which it

is possible to appreciate the day-to-day operations of a student newspaper rather than attempting to reconstruct the orientations which impact such operations from the outside. The former of these two options could be logistically difficult, but likely quite feasible with time and the cooperation of participants; the latter, however, (except perhaps in the case of an already-established staffer interested in the endeavor and able to obtain consent from all concerned) present more challenges – though surely such research would provide access to a richness of data simply unavailable in examining the public face (i.e. the printed pages) of a student newspaper and the post-facto reflections of student journalists in interviews. I certainly hope to continue work in such directions, and that others may do so as well.

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# Appendix 1

## Prominent alumni of the Link and the McGill Daily

### The Link

Philip Authier – reporter, Montreal Gazette
Peggy Curran, reporter and columnist, Montreal Gazette
Alex Dubrota, Globe and Mail photographer
Steve Faguy, Montreal Gazette copy editor
Paul Gott, CBC Montreal news producer and lead singer of legendary punk band The Ripcordz
Ian Helperin, writer and journalist, author of *Unmasked: The final years of Michael Jackson* (2009)
Andrew McIntosh, Quebecor reporter and key figure in breaking the 'Shawinigate' affair
Terry Mosher (aka Aislin), Gazette/Syndicated editorial cartoonist (formerly with the *Loyola News*)
Alex Panetta, reporter and news editor, Canadian Press
Andy Riga – reporter, Montreal Gazette
Craig Silverman, journalist and writer, Columbia Journalism Review columnist
Giuseppe Valiante, reporter, National Post
Josey Vogels, sybdicated sex columnist

### The McGill Daily[391]

Donna Balkan, first executive director of Centre for Investigative Journalism
Mike Boone, Montreal Gazette columnist
Irwin Block, Montreal Gazette reporter
Leonard Cohen, musician, poet, and ladies' man
Irwin Cotler, international human rights lawyer and Member of Parliament
Jason Chow, reporter at The Financial Post
Victor Dabby, Montreal Gazette editor
Zach Dubinsky, CBCnews.ca editor*
Ira Dubinsky, Deputy Director of Communications for the federal New Democratic Party*
Ben Errett, arts editor at The National Post
Josh Freed, Montreal Gazette columnist
Adam Gopnik, writer for The New Yorker*
Julius Grey, civil rights lawyer*
Linda Gyulai, Montreal Gazette reporter
Joseph Heath, University of Toronto professor and co-author of *The Rebel Sell* (2004)*
Heidi Hollinger, World-famous photographer for her work with Russian politicians
Charles Krauthammer, Washington Post and Time magazine columnist
Robert Lantos, movie mogul
Irving Layton, poet
Mark Lepage, Montreal Gazette reporter

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[391] Adapted, retaining occupational description for those included (names added, for which such descriptions are not quoted from the Daily's own list, are marked with an *), from a list available at:
http://mcgilldaily.com/About%20us

David Levy, co-discoverer of the Shoemaker-Levy 9 comet
David Lewis, former leader of the federal New Democratic Party*
Frederick Lowy, Rector of Concordia University
M-J Milloy, former news editor of the Montreal Hour
J. Kelly Nestruck, arts reporter at The National Post/Globe and Mail
Andrew Phillips, editor-in-chief, The Montreal Gazette
Phyllis Platt, executive director of arts & entertainment at the CBC
Marc Raboy, McGill Professor and Beaverbrook Chair in Ethics, Media and Communications*
Simon Rabinovitch, Reuters correspondent*
George Radwanski, CBC televison producer
Enn Raudsepp, director of journalism at Concordia University
Judy Rebick, social activist and co-host Face Off on CBC Newsworld
Roberto Rocha, Montreal Gazette reporter*
Charles Shannon, Montreal Gazette editor
Julian Sher, producer the Fifth Estate CBC-TV
Kevin Siu, Publisher of Shift Magazine
Mark Starowicz, head of documentaries at CBC
Phillip Todd, managing editor at Maisonneuve magazine
Ian Urquhart, Queen's Park columnist, The Toronto Star
Sonia Verma, reporter at Canadian Press
William Weintraub, author
Jan Wong, columnist for The Globe and Mail
Barbara Yaffe, Vancouver Sun columnist

# Appendix 2

## Sample interview schedule (including oral consent protocol)

Do you mind if I record this?

[administer written consent form; oral consent protocol for telephone interviews]:

I'm doing this interview as part of my MA project in the Concordia Department of Sociology & Anthropology, looking at student journalism and political contention, the mission and practices of the student press, and the role of student journalists.

I'm going to ask a number of questions; you may of course discontinue at any time.

Finally, I should let you know that some information from interviews could be published. I am prepared to keep your identity confidential if you would prefer; would you prefer if we proceed on that basis?

Do you agree to continue?

QUESTIONS

1.  How did you come to be involved with the student press? Why the Daily/The Link? And what did the Daily/The Link have to offer you personally (or how did work at the paper sustain your interest)?

2.  How would you describe the role of a student newspaper such as the McGill Daily/The Link? How would you describe the 'mission' or guiding principles of the paper? What is student journalism for?

3.  What sorts of 'news values' were important to the paper in your time there? What made for a good story; what sorts of stories would the paper be most likely to vigorously pursue?

4.  Can you mention any particular issues or major themes that were prominent in your time at the McGill Daily? Any that stand out for you personally? I'd be particularly interested in stories that reflect an effort to make a political point or effect some kind of substantive change in the University or the community.

5.  How would you describe The Link's/The Daily's politics?

6.  Were there ever any conflicts over content and focus that reflected different views of the political role of the paper? Over what issues, and to what effect?

7. What are your thoughts on the question of the divide between news and editorial content in the paper, or on the tension between journalistic ideals of balance or objectivity and a progressive or activist stance?

8.  What kinds of relationships did news writers and editors have with activist groups (on-campus and off)?

9. How would you characterize the paper's portrayal of demonstrations and other public protest events? Can you give an example? How do you feel that the paper's coverage of activism and protest differed from mainstream accounts?

8. How would you characterize what's unique or positive about the Daily/The Link relative to other major sources of news, such as The Gazette or network television newscasts? How about the alternative weeklies? How about vis-a-vis on-campus competition? How about other independent media sources?

9. Is an explicit critique of mainstream media important to you or to others at the Daily/The Link? Is the paper a form of 'alternative' media?

10. Are there any particular publications, authors or other influential sources that you'd consider important in informing how you think the media should operate?

11. Within the wider university community, who do you think were avid readers? What was the target or core audience for the Daily? Are students apathetic, or is there a strong culture of engagement and active participation in the kinds of issues that the Daily/The Link writes about?

12. How was the paper's relationship with the student union?

13. How about with the administration?

15. How would you describe the day-to-day functioning of the paper and the relationships among writers and staff? The organization of the paper is set out to be democratic, non-hierarchical, etc. How does this play out in practice?

16. What are your thoughts on the role of humor in the paper? How would you characterize the kind of humor that typifies the Daily/The Link?

17. Broadly speaking were there any major changes or transitions with regard to the paper and its mission or emphasis in the time that you were there?

18. To your knowledge, where have former colleagues ended up? Was working at the Daily/The Link a step in a trajectory towards professional journalism, or something else? If you don't mind, I'd appreciate hearing about your own case in this regard...

19. The current ubiquity of digital media has posed a few problems for the traditional print publishing industry – and a lot of student papers seem to have a web presence that might be seen as a bit underdeveloped. What was the state of the website at the time you were there?/What is going on with the website right now?

Do you have any thoughts on what this means for student newspapers in general?

20. How do you feel that the paper's history plays into its current identity?

21. That's about it for most of the questions I have here. Any final thoughts, or anything essential that I've missed with my questions here?

## Appendix 3

## Methodology and tables:
## Quantitative analysis of protest event coverage

### The sample

Drawing on the Montreal *Gazette* for the 'mainstream sample' and on the *Link* and *McGill Daily*, articles were ultimately selected for coverage of particular pre-selected 'protest events' in Montreal and Quebec City, linked to 'anti-globalization' and police-brutality campaigns – specifically the October 2000 anti-G20 protests in Montreal (targeting G20 meetings in the city), the April 2001 anti-FTAA protests in Montreal and Quebec City (targeting the 'Summit of the Americas'), the October 2002 anti-FTAA protests in Montreal (organized in large part by student groups in solidarity with protests at the Summit in Quito, Ecuador), and the annual March 15 rally against police brutality held in Montreal (and primarily associated with SMO Collective Opposed to Police Brutality) for the years 2000-2009. An earlier, provisional, list of 'protest events' for inclusion was revised on the basis of existing coverage in the selected publications; specifically, certain events were excluded due to their occurrence in the summer months, when student newspapers were not publishing.

I sought to include all relevant coverage of selected 'protest events' from the five publications for a period spanning 7 days prior to, and 14 days following the first day of significant protest activity. In the case of the 2001 anti-FTAA protests, I extended this window to the beginning of April to account for the fact that student newspapers had ceased publishing by the time the Summit actually occurred, but included often significant coverage in their final issues of the semester.

All student newspaper articles were obtained via direct scrutiny of the relevant issues in libraries and archives, whereas articles from the *Gazette* were retrieved via the ProQuest Canadian Newsstand electronic database. ProQuest Canadian newsstand contains full coverage of articles from the print edition of the *Gazette* for the entire period examined (2000-2009), and searches were conducted for the relevant dates, using the Boolean search string *protest\* OR demonstrat\** applied to articles, abstracts and headlines. All hits were subsequently examined and parsed for relevance – based on mentions and/or substantive coverage of selected 'protests events' and related themes. I also conducted searches for other key terms (e.g. 'FTAA,' 'police brutality'), and made a brief survey of hard copies of the *Gazette* to avoid missing relevant content. For all publications examined, I chose to exclude articles falling outside of typical 'news' conventions, eliminating more columns and commentary, editorials, letters to the editor, and pieces written in the first person.

## Variables

**Media type:** As the primary dependent variable for analysis, 'media type' indicates whether articles are classified as 'mainstream' or 'student' media, as discussed above. I also employ a variable ('publication') indicating the specific publication in which each individual article appeared.

**Sourcing variables:** Jha (2007: 41) identifies 'sourcing' as a potentially significant indicator of how media coverage depicts protest events. Based on her work, I have chosen to count the number of 'protester sources' (those participating in or presenting a sympathetic view of protest) and 'pro-institutional sources' (government, police, and those presenting an unsympathetic view of protest) in each article as key variables in my analysis. Following Jha (with some modification), I further subdivide each category in terms of the relative authority of sources cited (official, authoritative, and unauthoritative sources).

These variables (recorded as a whole number) indicate the number of sources in each article, classified as either 'protester' or 'pro-institutional'. The former category includes the originating source of all statements or claims noted which are sourced from individuals and groups positively oriented towards the general cause of a 'protest event' (e.g. activist groups or SMOs, favourable politicians, 'experts' presenting a favourable position, individual protesters, and favourable bystanders or members of the public consulted as *vox populi*). The latter include the originating source of all statements or claims noted which are sourced from individuals and groups targeted by, or negatively oriented towards the general cause of a 'protest event' (e.g. officials in government or institutions targeted by protest, police, unfavourable politicians, 'experts' presenting an unfavourable position, and unfavourable bystanders or members of the public consulted as *vox populi*).

Each single source (organization, group, individual) in a given article was counted as one source. In some cases, a 'source' may be characterized only in general terms (e.g. 'organizers said...' or 'critics complained...'); similarly, statements may be reproduced from crowd chants, banners, or other written materials. These have been included, as my working definition of 'sources' seeks to capture each instance in which news-style coverage 'gives voice' or presents a statement or position from some person or group other than the journalist her/himself. In some cases, sources were indicated in the articles examined in ways that were tangential to coverage of protest events (i.e. their statements or information are seemingly unrelated), or which were impossible to define as 'protester' or 'pro-institutional' (i.e. ambiguous); these 'sources' were excluded.

The distinction between 'official,' 'authoritative' and 'unauthoritative' sources represents a subdivision of the 'protester' and 'pro-institutional' sources according to whether sources cited appear to be speaking from an 'official' position (e.g. elected officials, judges and prosecutors, leaders, representatives and spokespersons of formal groups and organizations), an 'authoritative' position (e.g. as members of formal groups or organizations concerned with a given 'protest event,' as prominent persons, or as possessors of some socially valued qualification

or position of authority, such as professors, individual police officers, former politicians, lawyers, etc.), or from an 'unauthoritative' position (e.g. individuals to whom none of the above criteria apply, 'protesters' in general, bystanders of members of the public consulted as *vox populi*.

In order to facilitate a subsequent analysis of the relationship between the number of 'protester' and 'pro-institutional' sources and 'story valence,' I recoded each as ordinal variables with four categories: 'none,' '1-2,' '3-4,' '5 or more.' The aim of this is to produce results more amenable to presentation (see following section).

**SMO mentions:** I follow Almeida and Lichbach (2003) in counting mentions of Social Movement Organizations associated with protest events, as an indicator of the richness of information included in coverage. This variable (recorded, again, as a whole number) indicates the number of Social Movement Organizations mentioned – that is, specifically named - in each article. This category includes any named non-state group or organization involved in the respective 'protest events,' including social justice, international development, anti-police brutality, civil rights, student, feminist, trade-union, and other groups favourable to the general cause of a given protest event.

**Story valence:** Again following Jha (2007), the variable 'valence' indicates whether coverage in a given article is judged 'positive', 'negative', or 'neutral/ambivalent'. This variable (coded as 'negative,' 'ambivalent/neutral' or 'positive') indicates the general orientation of the story presented in each article towards the respective 'protest events' and their participants. Although this remains a highly subjective judgment, key criteria include the relative importance and position accorded to protest messages and protester sources and the relative emphasis and presentation of positive (well-meaning, productive, socially or politically valued) versus negative (malevolent, destructive, violent, misguided, social or politically disvalued) attributions of value to protest participants. Articles which appeared to 'give voice' to protest messages without significantly undermining their content (i.e. by framing them as 'naïve' or malevolent) were characterized as positive; those which characterized protest and protesters as violent or naïve and/or marginalized movement messages in favour of pro-institutional sources were classified as negative. In many cases the content of articles was impossible to classify as either, and articles were coded as 'ambivalent/neutral'.

**Story prominence index:** an index of relative prominence in the publication, based on a computation of discrete variables measuring 'story length', 'story placement', and the presence of accompanying photographs. In order to construct a single variable measure which indicates the relative prominence of stories in the respective papers, I combined the variables measuring 'story placement,' 'story length,' and 'photos' to create a scale. This variable is simply the computed sum of the three aforementioned variables for each case (that is, for each story or article). Given that all three individual measures are constructed as ordinal variables with the lowest value (1) indicating the greatest prominence with respect to each aspect of story presentation, and the highest - (3) for 'photos,' (5) for 'story length,' and (4)

for 'story placement' – indicating the least, the lowest score yielded by a sum of the three – and subsequently partitioned into an ordinal with 4 categories for 'most prominent,' 'prominent,' 'somewhat' and 'least prominent' - offers a (somewhat crude) measure of the overall prominence of individual articles.

**[see next page for selected statistical tables]**

# Selected statistical tables

## FIGURE 4: ANOVA variance of means, sourcing variables by level of authority

ANOVA

|  |  | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| pro offic. | Between Groups | 2.943 | 1 | 2.943 | 2.767 | .099 |
|  | Within Groups | 126.561 | 119 | 1.064 |  |  |
|  | Total | 129.504 | 120 |  |  |  |
| pro athor. | Between Groups | .027 | 1 | .027 | .016 | .899 |
|  | Within Groups | 194.602 | 119 | 1.635 |  |  |
|  | Total | 194.628 | 120 |  |  |  |
| pro unauthor. | Between Groups | .727 | 1 | .727 | .237 | .627 |
|  | Within Groups | 365.141 | 119 | 3.068 |  |  |
|  | Total | 365.868 | 120 |  |  |  |
| inst offic. | Between Groups | 18.320 | 1 | 18.320 | 15.478 | .000 |
|  | Within Groups | 140.854 | 119 | 1.184 |  |  |
|  | Total | 159.174 | 120 |  |  |  |
| inst author. | Between Groups | .766 | 1 | .766 | 2.387 | .125 |
|  | Within Groups | 38.209 | 119 | .321 |  |  |
|  | Total | 38.975 | 120 |  |  |  |
| inst unauthor. | Between Groups | .263 | 1 | .263 | 2.495 | .117 |
|  | Within Groups | 12.547 | 119 | .105 |  |  |
|  | Total | 12.810 | 120 |  |  |  |

## FIGURE 5: story valence by media type

**media type \* story valence Crosstabulation**

| | | | story valence | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | negative | ambivalent/neutral | positive | Total |
| media type | mainstream | Count | 19 | 31 | 23 | 73 |
| | | % within media type | 26.0% | 42.5% | 31.5% | 100.0% |
| | student | Count | 1 | 8 | 39 | 48 |
| | | % within media type | 2.1% | 16.7% | 81.3% | 100.0% |
| Total | | Count | 20 | 39 | 62 | 121 |
| | | % within media type | 16.5% | 32.2% | 51.2% | 100.0% |

# FIGURE 6: Crosstabulation of media type and story prominence (index)

**media type * story prominence Crosstabulation**

| | | | story prominence | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | very prominent | prominent | somewhat prominent | least prominent | Total |
| media type | mainstream | Count | 7 | 13 | 42 | 11 | 73 |
| | | % within media type | 9.6% | 17.8% | 57.5% | 15.1% | 100.0% |
| | student | Count | 5 | 27 | 15 | 1 | 48 |
| | | % within media type | 10.4% | 56.3% | 31.3% | 2.1% | 100.0% |
| Total | | Count | 12 | 40 | 57 | 12 | 121 |
| | | % within media type | 9.9% | 33.1% | 47.1% | 9.9% | 100.0% |

# Appendix 4

*[this document appears as an appendix to the DPS AGM minutes of April 4, 2004]*

The McGill Daily School of Journalism

## Why?

- Because the McGill Daily is a bi-weekly newspaper, which is a product of journalism – mostly newspaper journalism, but also aspects of magazine journalism in most sections outside News. The Daily is not a club like other clubs – our office isn't on the fourth floor of Shatner. The Daily exists in the context of journalism first, and the context of McGill extra-curriculars second.
- Because regardless of whether the people working at the Daily envision pursuing a career in journalism, their time at the Daily should be spent learning and practising the craft of journalism.
- Because journalism is exciting and engrossing. One need not be a future war correspondent to be intrigued by the dilemmas faced by war correspondents. By fostering a journalistic atmosphere, people can appreciate the context, the importance, and the excitement of their work.

## What?

- First, a library of books. The McGill Daily should own a number of books about journalism, journalistic design and journalistic photography which anybody can read and which are easily available. The MDSJ should also encourage staff and editors to bring in their own books with their names written on the inside to spread the word and share the wealth. An honour-system sign out list could be used to keep track of books taken out of the office.
- Second, a collection of periodicals. The Daily should subscribe to periodicals like The Globe and Mail in English and Le Devoir in French that every journalist should have access to. It would also be beneficial to subscribe to magazines or other papers (such as the NYT) which can both guide our writers, designers and photographers (including ourselves) as well as immersing us in excellent journalistic writing, designing and photography. Ed-board should decide which periodicals best meet our goals. The MDSJ should encourage staff and editors to bring in their own periodicals when

they're done with them as well, so that the office is always replete with excellent journalism.

- Third, an evolving course pack. We have all read fantastic articles about journalism or design or photography and we have all read, or seen fantastic illustrations of good journalism. These can be photocopied and collected in a course-pack format at Copy Nova for a low price. These resources could be invaluable for new and experienced staff and/or editors.
- Finally, an effort to get outside journalists to teach us. The MDSJ should explore the possibility of having outside journalists – former Daily editors, local writers, notable journalists willing to speak with us – come and speak to ed-board and staff or deliver talks to the McGill public. Ed-board should decide whether we are willing to offer speaking fees and if so, how much we are willing to offer. SSMU's budget for speakers should be tapped to help sponsor these events.

How and When?

- We can pick newspapers to subscribe to immediately and suspend those subscriptions over the summer. For many periodicals, it may be cheapest to order them through student deals offered at the beginning of the semester and, for now, reimburse (fully or partially) editors who purchase periodicals from the stand that ed-board considers valuable
- There is already a sheet posted where editors can write down suggestions for books
- Ed-board should decide whether the MDSJ should be the responsibility of Ed-board as a whole, or of a specific editorial position (such as Coordinating or Commentary) or an informal or formal group (committee?)
- A budget for the MDSJ must be established

The MDSJ is as much an idea as a series of concrete initiatives. It's the idea that when we become editors, we focus so much on teaching our writers, photographers and future designers that we risk forgetting how much we still have to learn. In that respect, we are not so far form our staff.