

DRAFT

**Representing Minorities:
Canadian Media and Minority Identities_**

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1. Introduction

The portrayal of minorities in Canadian media serves to play a formidable role in shaping the formation of Canadian minority identities. This paper provides a critical review of studies that examine the complex relationship between Canadian media and minorities.¹ Given the auspices of this special series about identity, it is important to ask how media representations of minorities affect the construction of identities in Canada. Researchers have insisted that it is imperative to research media-minority relations because the media play a crucial role in the creation of social identities (Henry 1999). The media provides an important source of information through which citizens gain knowledge about their nation, and our attitudes and beliefs are shaped by what the media discerns as public knowledge. The media is directly responsible for how Canada, in all its diversity, is interpreted among its citizens. It is through the media that Canadians get a sense of the country outside their own localities. Often unequipped with direct experience of Canadian cities given the sheer vastness of this nation, Canadians rely upon the media to tell them about their country. For example, a teenager living in Fredericton or Whitehorse will only get a sense of life in Vancouver and Toronto through media images of those cities. Thus, the power of the media cannot be underestimated. Simply put, the media is responsible for the ways that Canadian society is interpreted, considered and evaluated by its residents.

The media influences attitudes in Canada by siphoning and selecting the information we receive to make choices about our day- to-day realities. However, this selection process is governed by a series of imperatives. Media images of Canadian minorities are not just a random panoply of representations. Decisions about representations of cultural diversity ought to be envisioned within a series of competing discourses taking place within media institutions. Despite what we would like to believe, Canadian media is not fair, democratic nor objective in nature (Hacknett, Gruneau, Gutstein, Gibson and NewsWatch Canada 2000). The “traditional” journalistic focus on balance, objectivity and impartiality does not mean that everyone receives equal treatment in media representations. Minority groups are regularly excluded and marginalized, and the dominant culture is reinforced as the norm. As Jiwani has noted, “the media are among the richest organizations in society. They constitute a monopoly of knowledge, and through their practices of selection, editing and production, they determine the kinds of news we receive about our nation” (Jiwani 1995). The media has the power to choose which images of minorities dominate the public domain. As researchers have demonstrated (Fleras and Kunz 2001; Henry 1999) the media propel certain traits, most often negative, about minorities into the spotlight, whilst others are downplayed or completely absent from representations. How does this

1 A clarification of terms seems useful at this point. It is important to note that I am employing the term “minorities” throughout this paper to encompass a wide rubrick of racial, cultural and ethnic and linguistic groups, including “visible minorities,” “cultural groups,” “racialized peoples,” “non-whites,” “religious minorities” and “people of colour” in order to mirror the work of other researchers in this field (Fleras and Kunz 2001; Henry 1999). However, employing this identification is contentious. The term can be essentialist, and often fail to recognize the great diversity of ethnicities, cultures, and religious and linguistic differences that come under this definition. I refer the reader to Karim’s insightful examination of the struggles between discourses on ethnocultural terminology that reflect different conceptions of majority-minority relations in Canadian society (see Karim 1993).

affect identity formation among minority groups?

Negative depictions of minorities teach minorities in Canada that they are threatening, deviant, and irrelevant to nation-building. These portrayals are damaging to the psyche because they can effectively serve to instill inferiority complexes among minorities. Gist comments: “strong signals are being sent to [minority] youth about what they can become...there are few positive role models...in messages and images modeled in the mass media” (Gist 1990:58). Through demeaning characterizations and an absence of nuanced representations, minorities are made to feel as if they do not belong. One need only turn to consider the portrayal of Canadian Blacks or South Asians on television. Very few sitcoms and dramatic series include people from either group. They are most often typified as criminals or deviant when they are portrayed. It is clearly demoralizing for Canadian Blacks and South Asians to be bombarded with these kinds of representations in radio, television and print. As Kelly (1998) suggests through her analysis of the perceptions and experiences of Black Canadian high school students, the media act as sources for the identities they adopt and create in their homes, schools and throughout their adolescent years (Kelly 1998:58).

Canadian media continue to broadcast negative and stereotypical images that only serve to demean minority Canadians. In other words, ethnic minorities do not see themselves accurately reflected in Canadian media, and that marginalization perpetuates feelings of exclusion—especially when we place value upon those representations as fair and equitable mirrors of our nation. As Wilson and Gutierrez note, “in the absence of alternative portrayals and broadened coverage, one-sided portrayals and news articles could easily become the reality in the minds of the audience” (Wilson and Gutierrez 1985:41-42). Non-reflective media personalities and recurrent stereotypes impact negatively upon the identity of minority Canadians because these portrayals suggest who we are as Canadians, who is allowed to belong, and who is located on the peripheries of Canadianness (Bullock and Jafri 2001). They also affect non-minority Canadians’ understanding of minorities through the replication of negative stereotypes of minority groups. As Kelly states, “representation and reality are concepts that determine and are determined by each other” (Kelly 1998:52).

In Canada, questions surrounding the relationship between identity formation among minorities and media are particularly fraught because of multicultural policy. It has been suggested that in countries where official multiculturalism is legislated, complex forms of racism can emerge through various media representations of minorities (Dunn and Mahtani 2001). As Essed reminds us, “when...racism is transmitted in routine practices that seem ‘normal,’ at least for the dominant group, this can only mean that racism is not often recognized, not acknowledged—let alone problematized by the dominant group” (Essed 1991:10). Multicultural policy affects media representations of minorities in Canada because by law, Canadian media organizations are expected to reflect “the multicultural and multiracial nature of Canada” (Broadcasting Act 1991). However, it has been suggested that this law is regularly disregarded in Canadian press, radio and television accounts (EQUALITY NOW! 1984; see also DuCharme 1986:11; Dunn and Mahtani 2001)

and can result in even more subtle forms of stereotyping and prejudice appearing in the media alongside more blatant forms of discrimination. While there can be a progressive relationship between multicultural policy and inclusion of minorities with the nation-state, this inclusion is often based upon stereotypes of minorities.

This paper progresses in the following fashion. The first section provides a comprehensive literature review of studies completed in Canada and focusing on media-minority relations. I then explore some other areas of research related to work on media and minorities, including the research that has examined ethnic media, audiences, media ownership and the role of media workers in depicting ethnic minorities. Finally, I examine some of the key theoretical and empirical challenges to the field by posing some potential research questions that have been determined further to discussions with professionals in this area.

2. Ethnic Minority Portrayal: Under-Representation and Mis-Representation

From its inception in the late 1960s to the 1980s, research on media-minority relations was largely preoccupied with examining the two main ways in which ethnic minorities are problematically treated in media accounts: under-representation (or absence) of ethnic minorities, and mis-representation (or negative portrayal) of ethnic minorities. Both of these forms of partiality ultimately have much the same impact: they limit citizenship and provide justification for the continued oppression of minorities in Canada by “serv[ing] as substitutions, [and] standing in for what is real. They do not tell it like it is, but invite and encourage pretence” (Kelly 1998:52). I explore under-representation and mis-representation in turn.

A) Under-Representation

The under-representation of a range of cultural groups in Canadian media has been suggestive of their unimportance or their non-existence. Most of the early research on ethnic representation was concerned with unveiling their absence in the media in order to demonstrate this claim. Various researchers have found that despite the culturally diverse nature of Canadian society, that very diversity is regularly absent from media representations (Fleras and Kunz 2001; Fleras 1994). This is particularly disappointing given that Canada has capitalized on multicultural principles as a framework for governing ethnic diversity.

Early studies pointed out that the problematic media depiction of immigrants is by no means a recent phenomenon. Anderson has demonstrated that newspaper accounts in the late 1800s were vehemently anti-Chinese (Anderson 1987). Minorities remain largely absent from magazines and soap operas in Canada (MediaWatch 1994). MacGregor’s study of visible minority women in the magazine *Maclean’s* over a thirty-year period (MacGregor 1989) unveiled the invisibility of women of colour in the national magazine. As Fleras (1995) points out, the lack of minorities in the Canadian media is the rule, rather than the exception. Not only are specific groups excluded from representation, cultural

mixing itself has been avoided. In Canada, interracial relationships in dramatic series are rare. If depicted at all, the relationship is often riddled with problems (see Mahtani 2000; Camper 1994). It has been suggested that there has not been one successful “mixed race” relationship depicted in a Canadian series,² despite the reality that there are more interracial relationships in Canada than ever before (Mahtani 2000). This effectively demonstrates that the media is not accurately providing a mirror in which minority Canadians can see themselves—and their dating patterns—reflected.

In a study of ethnic minorities’ representation in Canadian entertainment programmes, MediaWatch monitored eight made-in-Canada dramatic series and discovered that only 4% of the female characters and 12% of the male characters were from diverse ethnic or racial backgrounds (MediaWatch 1994). This reveals that ethnic minorities (and especially ethnic minority women) are severely under-represented in both dramatic series and in news. Miller and Prince (1994) provided a similar examination from a news angle by looking at the photos and news stories published in six major Canadian newspapers. They concluded that out of the 2141 photos published, ethnic minorities were presented in only 420 images. Of those, 36% were photos of athletes. They went on to demonstrate that out of the 895 news stories published in those papers, only 14% discuss minorities at all, which is dramatically less than the 20% share of the population ethnic minorities occupy in the combined population of the five cities where the newspapers are published (Vancouver, Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto, and Montreal). The paucity of voice is a particular feature of the problematic media treatment of First Nations peoples. Not only have Indigenous people generally not been heard in most media representations, they were, until recently, also silenced in portrayals (Francis 1992; see also Meadows 1991, Singer 1982).

Media researchers have indicated that the impact of minority marginality in the media only serves to further entrench the invisibility of ethnic minorities in society (Fleras 1995). Ethnic minorities in Canada do not see themselves mirrored in the media, and this perpetuates feelings of rejection, trivializes their contributions and devalues their role as citizens in their nations (see Gosine 2001; Jiwani 1995). For example, in their paper “Media (Mis)Representations: Muslim Women in the Canadian Nation,” Bullock and Jafri provide excerpts from their focus groups, where Muslim women met to discuss the representation of Muslim women in the media. Bullock and Jafri found that many of the women were acutely aware that their own experiences as Muslim women were repeatedly ignored in favour of more sensationalized coverage (Bullock and Jafri 2001). The absence of complex representations of minorities also problematically encourages whiteness as the norm in the media, where “whiteness quietly embraces our common-sense ways...of thinking...what we are told is ‘normal,’ neutral, universal, simply becomes the way it is” (Mirza 1997:3; see Fleras and Kunz 2001 and Daley 1997). This limited presentation of voices reinforces exclusion—effectively silencing immigrants who would speak about the future of the country and undermining their sense of belonging (Fleras and Kunz 2001). The very invisibility of minority issues and minority communities in Canadian media contribute to a sense of

² For examples, see CBC’s now defunct *Street Legal* and the current CTV drama, *The Associates*. Although both shows feature interracial relationships, neither relationship was to succeed, thus demonstrating to audiences that interracial unions are doomed to failure (Mahtani 2000).

“otherness” for minority Canadians.

B) Mis-Representation

A beneficial result of these early studies was the impetus they provided for media researchers to examine how the media portrays ethnic minorities when they are actually represented. Researchers have suggested that the representation of non-dominant cultures generally expanded in recent decades (Fleras 1995). However, most studies have concluded that such expansion has been very careful not to challenge Eurocentric cultural hegemony (Crawford 1998; Jiwani 1995; Fleras 1994). One of the ways in which Eurocentric hegemony is retained is by limiting the kinds of portrayals of ethnic minorities in the media to negative or exotic stereotypes.

Ethnic minorities have insisted that media portrayals of their constituents reveal an unrelenting negativity in their portrayal. Media researchers, in a variety of studies, have pointed to the negative depictions of ethnic minorities (Tator 1999; Fleras 1995; Miller 1994; Ungerleider 1991). In studies emerging in the 1970s, researchers in Canada have consistently pointed out that the media “stagnate... on race-specific and culture conscious characterizations of people” (Wong 1977:269). Canadian media continue to rely on both negative and stereotypical depictions of ethnic minorities (Roth 1996; MediaWatch 1994; Fleras 1994; Zolf 1989). Fleras (1994) has explained how ethnic minority images in Canadian media are consistently stereotypical ones, “steeped in unfounded generalizations that veer towards the comical or grotesque” (Fleras 1994:273). Indeed, examples of ethnic minorities as “social problems” abound: namely, as pimps, high-school dropouts, homeless teens or drug pushers in Canadian dramatic series. As he puts it, “The media rely on minorities as... a foil for sharpening the attributes of mainstream heroes, a catalyst for driving plot lines or character development, or a token dash of colour to an otherwise pallid cultural package” (Fleras and Kunz 2001:155). Fleras makes the crucial note that ethnic minorities are rarely represented as people who have something important to say—instead, their “lived experiences [are] reduced to the level of an ‘angle’...for spicing up plot lines” (Fleras 1995:6). The ex-media critic for the *Globe and Mail*, John Haslett Cuff, has commented that on television, images of Black Canadians are often limited to roles of villains or victims, or buffoons and folksy sitcom types (Cuff 1990; see also Daley 1997).

The portrayal of Indigenous people has also perpetuated stereotypes. Fleras discusses a smattering of media representations of First Nations people, including “the noble savage,” “the savage Indian,” “blood-thirsty barbarians” and “the drunken Native” among other damaging stereotypes (Fleras 1994; see also Fleras and Kunz 2001). In a special issue of the *Canadian Journal of Communications*, Gail Guthrie Valaskakis provides an insightful discussion of the narratives surrounding First Nations women. She explains that “Indians are experiencing a new battlefield of appropriated identity rooted in the salient representation that was constructed during the Mohawk occupation at Oka: the media warrior. In television and newsprint and political cartoons, media’s warriors were transformed primitives, monolithic representations of Indian activists” (Valaskakis 1993). Gender is a relatively unexplored aspect of studies about minority representation, as

Jiwani (1995) has indicated. In previous work, Jiwani (1992) has shown that visible minority women in films are often portrayed as deceptive and sinister. Clearly, the relationship between minority representation and other markers of identity, like class and gender, need to be more fully unravelled, as will be discussed further in the recommendation section of this paper.

Several actors and news anchors have spoken out openly about their concerns regarding ethnic misrepresentation in the media. First Nations actor Gary Farmer has explained how on-screen images only serve to promote Aboriginal clichés, and that the dominant norm of whiteness creates invisible assumptions about what is considered part of an appropriate Canadian history (Southam News 1997). Similarly, Rita Deverell, senior producer of *Vision TV*, has voiced her opinions about the problematic representation of ethnic minorities in television. Deverell has pointed out that compared to US images, “we have very few negative, malevolent portrayals of women of colour. In Canada, we tend to sin by omission” (in MediaWatch 1994), thus implying that women of colour rarely make it into the picture. This perspective has been echoed by Canadian Black actress Tonya Lee Williams at the recent CHUM-TV colloquium on minorities in media, held in Victoria.

Clearly, many researchers agree that in mainstream media in Canada, ethnic minorities are presented as threats. Indeed, mainstream media present overt positionings of “us” and “them,” in which the former is an assumed mainstream audience, while the latter is the ethnic minority (Fleras and Kunz 2001; Daley 1997). Non-white groups are portrayed as “mysterious, inscrutable, or incompatible” with the dominant culture (Sun 1997-98). One Black Canadian actor has observed wryly that “stereotypical images are all caricatures of people who intrinsically lack something—who are only half human. For non-whites it breeds a sense of inferiority, shame in one’s heritage, and lower expectations of achievement” (Henry 1983:10). This phenomenon is unfortunately not limited to television dramas—it occurs in newspapers and television news as well. A report, conducted by the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg (1996) and focussing specifically on ethnic minorities and First Nations peoples’ portrayal in two major Winnipeg papers, found that ethnic minorities are often denied access to the media; it also cites the problematic reportage of ethnicity when it is irrelevant to the incident or event. Tator (1995) has demonstrated that ethnic minorities are constantly being “singled out” and identified as the source of a “social problem” in media representations. Using the example of the “Writing Through Race” Conference held in Vancouver of 1994, she explains that the media continually misrepresents and distorts issues of importance to ethnic minorities. In this particular case, the media became obsessed with the conference organizer’s desire to close certain sessions to white writers in order to provide a critical, comfortable space for writers of colour to share their ideas and experiences. Deeming the conference a threat to national values and “an act of racism,” several media organizations expressed their criticism of the conference’s aims for weeks after the event (Tator 1995).

Some of the most probing work on the perpetuation of stereotypes has explored the ways ethnic minorities have been homogenized in Canadian news reports. Several government reports funded through official multiculturalism have examined the coverage of diversity in

the media, concluding that stereotypes and negative images prosper (see Karim 1995; Karim 1992). Ducharme (1986) examined national newspaper coverage of the Canadian immigration policy for a five-year period. Her research demonstrated that the use of particular quotes, headlines and clichés resulted in representations that were discriminatory and racist, describing immigrants as a “threat to the system, but also to Canadians as individuals” (DuCharme 1996:3). A recent study by Henry (1999) raised disturbing concerns about the media’s role in exacerbating racism in Canada. In an analysis of three major newspapers in the Toronto area, Henry demonstrated that the media, “by their selective and subtle use of stereotypes and generalization...contribute to the development of a negative image of racial communities, which are then marginalized and legislated against” (Henry 1999:vii). Through her project analyzing *The Toronto Sun* daily from 1978-1985, Tator found a “persistent pattern of prejudice and racism” (Tator 1995:1). In his examination of the relationship between multiculturalism and media-minority relations, Karim discovered that there was a rise in newspaper coverage of multicultural issues from 1980-1988 but that most of that coverage was negative. The media tended to display a hostile attitude towards multiculturalism, envisioning the policy as interfering with nation-building (Karim 1989; see also Jiwani 1995). Miller and Prince (1993) also looked at the ways that minorities were depicted. Their two-month content analysis of 2141 photos and 895 local news stories in six major papers found that minorities are reflected in three major ways in the papers: half of the images of minorities are of either athletes or entertainers or in trouble with the law; and that few stories make any significant reference to how these stories contribute to the well-being of Canada. As John Miller comments “[R]ace relations does not receiv[e] ongoing coverage, and so it is usually reactive, negative and lacking context when it appears” (Miller 1998:133).

The depiction of the Asian population in Canada has also been of interest to researchers. Riley (1993) has pointed out that news reports consistently talk about the so-called “Asian crime wave” in Ottawa. Furthermore, as Greenberg notes, these reports compare the immigration of particular Asian groups to a natural catastrophe (Greenberg 2000). Dunn and Mahtani (2001) have indicated that in television news documentaries, the Asian population is homogenized as a group of people who threaten national resources and exemplify a “social problem” facing “real” Canadians. Henry (1999), through her cogent analysis of “Asian gangs” in the discourse of a Chinese restaurant slaying, has also examined the way the Asian population has been essentialized in news reports. She explains there is an assumption in the papers that the killing of an Asian by another Asian has to be gang-related; and that although it later became obvious that this was not the case, the papers continued to print articles about the gangland aspect (Henry 1999). The depiction of the home spaces of immigrants has also been scrutinized. Journalists give voice to white horror at the Asian immigrant domicile in Vancouver, the so-called “monster home” (Dunn and Mahtani 2001; Wanning Sun 1997-98; Li 1994). This phrase is routinely employed in news narratives, revealing the perception of the “monster home” as “ugly, frightful and ominous...a metaphor of the character of the people living in it, giving a concrete...dimension to the traditional Orientalist image of the Chinese” (Sun 1997-98:147). One of the most recent discourse analysis studies related to the Asian population is provided by Greenberg, who examines the content and expressions of “opinion” discourses

surrounding the arrival of the Fujianese refugees off the coast of British Columbia in 1999. In a study of 57 articles from July-October 1999, Greenberg found the five papers to be critical of the refugees, and he points out some key themes which emerged in the articles. In short, migrants were often portrayed as the “disease-carrying embodiment of danger who posed a significant threat to the moral, physical and economic well-being of ‘legitimate’ Canadians” (Greenberg 2000:531).

Particular religious groups have also been subjected to intense scrutiny in the media (Karim 2000; Canadian Islamic Congress 2000). Clearly, the September 11th terrorist attack, its aftermath and the ways in which the event and Islam is portrayed in the Canadian media is a subject of interest and concern for media researchers and is worthy of further debate and discussion at this seminar. How does the primary stereotype of the “violent Muslim” influence contemporary perceptions of Islam, for example? How do polarized frameworks of culture (Christian versus Muslim; Islam versus ‘the West’; ‘The East’ versus ‘The West’) dominate mainstream media approaches to create a global media narrative? Unfortunately, our research in this arena remains limited. During the early 1990s, researchers provided a useful Canadian counterpart to American studies that were concerned with anti-Islamic images proliferating in American news. Winter (1992) described the way commercial media systematically distort the reportage of major news events in Canada, paying attention to the media portrayal of the Gulf War as well as the Oka standoff, the Ontario’s NDP budget and the Meech Lake Accord. Similarly, Mayer (1998) provides a probing analysis of the portrayal of Iraqis during the Desert Storm crisis by examining how clichés like “Middle Eastern terrorists” and “Islamic Fundamentalists” are frequently found in news dailies. Advocacy groups have also contributed to this debate: a case in point includes the report produced by the Afghan Women’s Organization, which reviews research, ensures local activism and provides community perspectives on the portrayal of Muslim women in Canadian media (Jafri 1998). Based on a six-month evaluation of coverage of several Canadian newspapers, the MediaWatch Group of the Canadian Islamic Congress conducted a study of anti-Islamic media coverage, recommending solutions to the media industry (Canadian Islamic Congress 1998). A 1998 conference on Media and Faith spurred debate about religion and media. At the event, Carleton University professor Lois Sweet presented the results of a survey of over 1300 newspaper stories in 8 provinces, stating that of all religious groups in Canada, Roman Catholics (about 45 percent of Canadians) and Jews (about 1.2 percent) get the most coverage in the print media (in Baglo 1998). According to her study, Protestants, who represent 36.5 percent of the population, were rarely mentioned in the papers. Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs and other “religious minorities” “got little ink,” except in news wire stories from international sources (Baglo 1998).

Advertising has also been criticized for reinforcing the status quo. The work of Kunz and Fleras (1998) has examined advertising and minority representation in Canada. They demonstrate through an analysis of advertisements in *Maclean’s* magazines that people of colour are overrepresented (cleaning and domestic ads; tourist ads) in some categories yet underrepresented in others (alcohol ads). D’Innocenzo (2001) conducted discourse analysis surveys of Canadian magazines and found that few ads include the presence of

visible minorities. She also discovered, through interviews with advertising professionals, that there were few people of colour working in the Canadian ad business. In a Canadian Advertising Foundation study, minorities were rarely portrayed as “ordinary people” (CAF 1992; see also MacGregor 1989; Wyckham 1983).

The repercussions of stigmatizing minorities through repetitive stereotypical images in advertising are immense. It has been suggested that inclusive and diverse representation may well mean an increase in sales. A Canadian Advertising Foundation study indicated that minorities are more likely to make a purchase if the advertising for that product included the presence of minorities (CAF 1992). Samuel suggests that the economic power of minorities in Canada is increasing, with assets in the range of approximately \$300 billion or about 20 percent of Canada’s GNP (in Fleras and Kunz 2001; Samuel 1998). These figures have made advertisers sit up and take notice. No doubt, there are less blatantly negative images of minorities in commercials; advertisements foster images that, in a superficial and glamorous fashion, attempt to embrace diversity, as demonstrated through the Benetton campaign. But researchers insist that minorities continue to be seen through the skewed lens of whiteness (Wilson and Gutierrez 1995). Minorities are not seen as “regular folk” in advertising, despite the growing reality that they also have spending power. Fleras and Kunz suggest that many advertising companies may be trepidatious to contemplate avenues of reaching the minority audience because “those who work in advertising and marketing feel unqualified to create or authorize expensive targeting programs towards ethnic communities that they know little about in terms of language or culture” (Fleras and Kunz 2001:119). Clearly, the very whiteness of the industry plays a role in perpetuating these ideas about minorities and their ability to contribute to Canadian society. The relationship between minority purchasing patterns and equitable representation of minorities in advertising is one that has yet to be fully explored.

Francophone media is another arena that requires further study, as the scope of the research is much more circumscribed in this case. Francophones have also received bad press in Canadian Anglophone media. Potvin (1999), in a study that analyzes how Quebec events between 1995-1999 were portrayed in English-Canadian newspapers, demonstrates that Francophones are often perceived as “others” and as a threat to Canadian identity. We need to further examine the links between linguistic diversity and minority representation, as the papers by Henry Chow and Cynthia Baker in this series suggest. In his paper, “Is Quebec Culture Doomed to Become American,” Tremblay conducts a discourse analysis of the presence of American programmes on Quebec television from 1982 to 1989. He states that American programmes represent “a potentially important but relative influence” (Tremblay 1992). Through a discussion of the constraints of the Quebecois cultural market, Tremblay argues that there is reason to be cautious of an American cultural invasion. Thomas (1992) focuses on the intersection of English-Canadian broadcasting, French-language broadcasting, U.S. television programs and the role of ethnic and racial minorities. His work demonstrates that English and French broadcasting operate as two mutually exclusive systems, where the only common ground are American dramas. As Thomas states: “such conflicting broadcasting tendencies, cultural and linguistic policies, and diverging expectations towards the roles that ethnic minorities are to play within them,

make the integration of ethnic minorities within Quebec society a far more complex issue than anywhere else in the country” (Thomas 1992). Despite these studies, there remains a dearth of information concerning the representation of Francophones in English and French media which requires further attention.

Many news anchors have been vocal in expressing their dissatisfaction with the misrepresentation of minorities in the media. Irshad Manji has addressed the responsibility of media workers in combatting racism. Critiquing a documentary that aired on CTV’s news and information programme “W5” about multiculturalism, Manji explained how the journalists behind the episode were “protected by the common sense of whiteness” by asking the question “does multiculturalism harm”—when the appropriate question ought to have been, “does multiculturalism harm ‘mainstream’ tolerance” (Manji 1995). Suhana Meharchand, anchor for CBC News in Toronto, has similarly voiced her concerns over the misrepresentation of minorities in the media at the CHUM-TV colloquium in March 2001.

In the late 1990s, researchers found that the amount of blatantly racist material in the media had reduced (Henry 1999), pointing out that there were fewer monstrous depictions of minority groups, and that they were much less likely to be overtly stereotyped. However, researchers insist that this is no cause for celebration. It has been posited that this turn of events can be attributed to the rise of “the new racism” or what Henry et al. call “democratic racism,” an ideology through which commitment to democratic ideals like equality and fairness are advocated, yet somehow seem to coexist with contrasting attitudes and behaviours that include discrimination of ethnic minorities. Henry et al. (1995) suggest that this form of racism remains deeply embedded within media institutions, where structuralist racism still pervade representations and regular patterns of under- and mis-representation continue to reinforce unequal power relations. In other words, it has been proposed that racism has simply become more canny, by taking on less conspicuous forms.

To summarize this section, Canadian studies of ethnic representation in the media have been concerned with unveiling the trivialization of minority experiences in order to point out the media’s inability to effectively hold up a mirror in which Canadian society can see its wide array of ethnic diversity accurately depicted. The narrow range of images of ethnic minorities has effectively decreased the ability of minorities to be seen as positive contributors to Canadian society. Media researchers have pointed out that these negative stereotypes are cause for concern, because it creates a divide between ethnic minorities and so-called “real” Canadians. Visible minority Canadians are seen as “others” or “foreigners” who potentially have the power to threaten the nation (Fleras 1995). The reinforcement of negative stereotypes culturally pathologize ethnic minorities, furthering racialized divides. Along those lines, it is worthwhile to quote from Henry:

[T]hrough analyzing the representations of people of colour in the media...[it seems clear that the] dominant culture continues to entrench its power and preserve its hegemony by inculcating negative and stereotypical images of minorities...creat[ing] a distorted perception on the part of the mainstream of minorities. Generations of negative projections of a group and constant repetition of negative images can harm individuals...and impact the development...of a healthy democratic society

(Henry 1999:135-136).

3. Moving Beyond Discourse Analysis: Other Avenues of Research

As is evidenced by these studies, much of the critical focus on media representations of ethnic minorities tend to come to fairly pessimistic conclusions. In large part, this is a reflection of the structuralist, content-analysis approach of most of the research. The next section examines the methods through which the majority of research on minorities in media has been analyzed, in order to demonstrate some of its limitations.

Research on ethnic minorities in the media has relied on a limited number of methods (Fleras 1994). In broad, this field has been methodologically dominated by content analysis. Content (or discourse) analysis is a technique for systematically analyzing a document or other cultural product (van Dijk 1991). This method calculates the number of negative and positive descriptions of a group. Many Canadian studies in this vein owe an intellectual debt to the work of Teun van Dijk, a Dutch scholar. van Dijk's work can be described as a structuralist take on media reporting concerned with both surface representations and underlying meanings. Much of the 1990s research on ethnic minority portrayals in the media refers to his seminal text, *Racism and the Press* (1991), in which he insists that media is a central part of the problem and the processes of racism (1991:x). As van Dijk indicates, it has been recognized for some time that the media is a site wherein ideas about race are articulated, reproduced and altered (see also Hall, 1981). Following van Dijk, Canadian researchers have concluded that the media is central to the ideological reproduction of racism and ethnic rankings (Fleras and Kunz 2001; Henry 1999; Fleras 1995). Although the work of van Dijk is more than a decade old, Canadian researchers have by no means abandoned this method of analysis—indeed, some of the most recent studies of media and minority relations include Greenberg's analysis of the newspaper coverage of the Fujianese boat people (Greenberg 2000) and Henry's 1999 study of the racialization of crime in Toronto's print media (Henry 1999; see also Mahtani and Mountz 2001).

Many critiques have been leveled at content analysis. Of particular importance is the way results of discourse analysis can be over-emphasized, as researchers can become somewhat diverted from a focus on the social production of media content (Fleras 1995; Fleras 1994). The approach has been subject to criticism because it is easily divorced from its context, and the media product is critically evaluated without an examination of the process through which the piece is constructed (Burgess and Gold 1985). The simple connections made through discourse analysis often veil an understanding of the complex and varied decision-making processes lurking behind the conception and portrayal of minorities in the media—a case made forcefully by Wyckham (1983) in his paper on female stereotyping in advertising. He points out that advertisers have not been interested in the findings of content analysis approaches precisely because of its lack of validity and difficulties in replicating studies based on the researcher's subjectivity in analyzing the advertisements. In particular, he indicates that any conception of the complicated decision-making processes in the creation of the cultural produce is ignored through the use of this method.

Wyckham is not alone in critiquing discourse analysis methods. Researchers like Fleras (1995) and Head (1981) have drawn similar conclusions about its limits. US media researchers have echoed those opinions, pointing out the weakness in theoretical examinations as well. "Productive media analysis is rather like an iceberg," writes Ferguson (1998). "The tip which shows may be likened to the moment of media analysis. The vast bulk which is not immediately visible is the intellectual, historical and analytical base without which media analysis runs the risk of becoming superficial, mechanical or glib" (Ferguson 1998:2). It is imperative to acknowledge the important contributions of researchers who have relied upon content analysis as their key methodological approach. After all, a critical examination of the representations is in order, to point out the problematic nature of images of minorities in the media. However, it has been suggested that we have not yet embarked upon research that is concerned with the complex and contradictory ways that "difference" is articulated and contemplated in the creation of these images. Researchers also make the valid point that absence and negativity confirm the non-normality of ethnic minorities and make up the majority of studies of ethnic minority representations in the media (Dunn and Mahtani 2001). It has been suggested that this reliance on a binary conceptual framework for analysis—evaluations that focus on under-representation or mis-representation of minorities in media—does not necessarily create ample room for media researchers to consider other sophisticated theoretical frameworks with which to understand media-minority relations. As Fleras has suggested, "Studies to date have emphasized descriptive accounts that rarely delve into causes, impacts and solutions" (Fleras 1992:340). Other researchers have agreed, coming to "the growing realization that pointing out wrongs and abuse does not necessarily solve the problem" (Fraser 1994:15). This perspective was echoed in interviews with media researchers (see the recommendation section of this paper).

Thus, in the past ten years, research has moved beyond these two modes of analysis towards a more nuanced discussion of minority-media relations. Media researchers have started to direct their attention away from simply citing examples of under-representation

or mis-representation in the media towards attempts to understand why these images are tolerated and produced at all. This development may also have been spurred on by developments in critical “race” theory that have further sparked new debate about media and minority relations in Canada. The work of cultural theorists like Stuart Hall (1981), Paul Gilroy (1993), Wilson and Gutierrez (1985) and Homi Bhabha (1994) have also inspired researchers to move beyond a discussion of tabulating media representations and begin examining the reasons behind the continued persistence of stereotypical portrayals related to multiculturalism, discrimination and the re-circulation of racist discourses.

In the following section, I show how researchers have moved beyond discourse analysis as the sole methodological tool. Firstly, I examine research that unravels the relationship between media ownership, economic imperatives and minority representations. Secondly, I explore the research on the role of the audience in consuming these media portrayals, where the audience has the power to select and interpret these images. Thirdly, I uncover the growing literature on ethnic media. Media representations of ethnic groups are not accepted uncritically by audiences. The so-called ‘ethnic lobbies’ have a track record of scrutinizing media representations. Some ethnic minority groups now have dedicated ‘news watchers’ or media watch-dogs. Finally, there is a body of literature focusing on media workers—those who create the representations themselves.

A) Media Ownership

The economic imperative in broadcasting poses a specific threat to ethnic and racial minorities. Broadcasting has often been accused of appealing to the lowest common denominator in order to maximize...market shares...this practice has...exclude[d]...minorities from television programming on the basis that their numbers were negligible (Thomas 1992).

Fleras (1994) has suggested that much of the existing research on media and minority coverage has underrated the challenges of restructuring media-minority relations. In their attempts to tabulate all the wrongdoings of media representations, Fleras says that researchers have downplayed the “commercial logics” underpinning these portrayals, and ignored the constructed nature of media reality and corporate commitments. He recommends a reconstitution of our analytical sites by exploring the mass media as a contested site for control among competing sectors (Fleras 1994). Canadian media researchers have posited about the role of economics in media representations of ethnic minorities (see Miller 1998). It has been suggested that fair representation of ethnic minorities is simply not possible in mass media, because such efforts cost too much in a world where the bottom line is profit, and cutbacks are numerous. Some researchers have disagreed with this supposition, claiming that a fair depiction of visible minorities in the news is achievable through changes in leadership in media organizations—changes that would not be costly in the slightest (Miller 1998; Canadian Newspaper Association’s Diversity Committee 1994). Others suggest that a key institutional determinant in ethnic minority representation issues is ownership of the media institutions themselves. Through an analysis of who owns the media organizations, their ideology and ambitions, as well as the role of management influence, Canadian researchers insist that media ownership

remains primarily in the hands of the corporate elite. Winter, in his book, *Democracy's Oxygen: How Corporations Control the News* (1997) provides an overview of the extent to which media ownership in Canada is concentrated in the hands of a few. He indicates that "far from providing democracy's oxygen...the news media today legitimize a fundamentally undemocratic system. Instead of keeping the public informed, they manufacture public consent for policies which favour their owners: the corporate elite" (Winter 1997:xv). Henry (1999) also points out that the ownership and management of media institutions by a few (mostly older white men) conservatives has led to a homogenized media—a media where conservative ideologies are reinforced. She goes on to note that Canada is the only country in the industrialized world to have no legislation to prevent concentration of newspaper ownership. The Canadian journalist Linda McQuaig has said:

We must remember that virtually all media outlets are owned by rich, powerful members of the elite. To assume that this fact has no influence on the ideas they present would be equivalent to assuming that, should the entire media be owned by, say, labour unions, women's groups or social workers, this would have no impact on the editorial content (McQuaig 1995:12).

As McQuaig points out, the implications of the media remaining in the hands of the elite has ramifications for democratic and equitable coverage. If the elite is in control of the media, then it becomes even harder to give voice to those without wealth or political influence (see Hackett, Gruneau, Gutstein, Gibson and NewsWatch Canada 2001). The potential for greater diversity of stories that expose racial injustice, or tell other kinds of stories about minorities decreases. As Hackett et al. demonstrate, what is not reported is as significant as what is reported, and the reasons behind those decisions are in part influenced by the growing monopoly of media ownership in Canada.

B) Audiences

Paradoxically, the same market approach that favoured the exclusion of ethnic and racial minorities from broadcasting is now being used by various pressure groups to convince advertisers and broadcasters that minority groups represent a significant untapped market (Thomas 1992).

In the late 1970s, media researchers in the US and the UK began to consider the ways "groups with least power [audiences] practically develop their own readings of, and uses for, cultural products—in fun, in resistance, or to articulate their own identity" (During 1993:7). As a result, the traditional image of audiences as indiscriminate sponges of media was effectively resisted. Although it is well acknowledged that audiences lack the means of access to mainstream media, researchers suggested that consumers of mass media actively interpret, perceive and determine the meanings of media representations. Media researchers have also examined audience views and impressions of the representation of ethnic minorities. In the 1960s and through the 1970s, there were consistent complaints on behalf of audiences as regards to their perceptions of ethnic representation in Canadian media. These complaints emerged from many briefs, studies and hearings which characterized the efforts of minorities to challenge their images in the

media, and were in part spurred on by the birth of official multiculturalism in Canada in 1971. The majority of these complaints were concerned with the persistence of negative stereotyping, ignorance and the invisibility of minorities in media reports. One of the most well-known studies of media treatment of minorities in Canada, the Report of the Committee on the Participation of Visible Minorities in Canadian Society (or EQUALITY NOW!) tabulated, in 1984, a severe indictment of media reporting of ethnic minorities in Canada. Insisting that mass media encourage a “white only mentality,” the report criticized advertising for adopting a “white sells” approach, and concluded that “[t]he concept of multiculturalism (in which immigrants play an integral part) is contradicted regularly and flagrantly, if not unintentionally, in the current practices and products of media institutions” (EQUALITY NOW! 1984:96).

Despite this report, more than a decade later, audiences continue to voice their concerns about the problematic representation of ethnic minorities. A 1995 focus group study conducted by Goldfarb Consultants on behalf of the Canadian Newspaper Association found that in six focus groups, over half of the ethnic minorities surveyed said they felt like they are treated like foreigners in daily newspapers, pointing out a lack of diverse and balanced coverage of their communities. They also noted that Canadian daily newspapers ignored many world news stories, especially from their native regions (Goldfarb Consultants 1995). Other studies suggest that ethnic minorities feel they are not deemed full citizens by the media. One comment submitted to the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) includes: “We are here simply to point out that what we see on the television screens...makes us feel as if we are in a foreign land, not one in which we are participating citizens” (in Tator 1995:3). Other studies echoed those sentiments. The report “Racism in the Media” outlines the proceedings of a Toronto conference where members of ethnic minority communities came forward to raise their concerns about problematic media representations of their constituencies (Racism in the Media 1995). What is interesting about these audience research findings is how they closely reflect the findings of content analyses: soap operas and advertising exclude ethnic minorities and Indigenous peoples; news stories tend to portray those groups with negativity, and the typical Canadian is constructed as white. Non-white Canadians have commented that this representation leaves them with a feeling of not being accepted into Canadian culture (Dunn and Mahtani 2001).

There is a concern that these media analyses tend to assume that audiences are merely passive consumers, unable to participate in developing challenges to stereotyping or the invisibility of ethnic minorities in the media. In the last decade, some media researchers have begun to observe the strategies being developed by ethnic minorities to resist their problematic media portrayal by acting as media “watch-dogs” or creating their own discourse analysis studies. Goodall et al. (1994:174) insist that such audiences are “active participants in the creation of meaning, and argue back at the media in their continual dialogue (often unvoiced) with them.” In this way, following decades of exclusion and insensitive representation, people of colour have become almost completely disenchanting with mainstream media (Goldfarb Consultants 1995).

C) Ethnic Media

In Canada, ethnic media are often referred to as the “third media”—a title that includes a wide array of media outlets, including ethnic presses and non-English and non-French programming (Fleras and Kunz 2001; Fleras 1994). Many “third media” outlets were funded through official multicultural policy. Financial aid was channelled to “third media” through the Department of Secretary of State to particular ethnocultural groups in order to “help maintain and enrich heritage culture and language, strengthen their communities and otherwise further the aims of the multicultural policy” (Department of Secretary of State Ottawa 1971:28). Fleras has provided an extensive list of “third media” programming in Canada, pointing out that there are over 2000 hours a week of non-English, non-French programming split among a variety of multilingual stations in Canada, including CFMT, which is among the world’s few full-time commercial TV stations to feature multicultural programming (Fleras 1994). Among the most successful attempts in Canada to foster a multicultural image is the example of CITY-TV, a Toronto-based television station that has gained both popular and critical acclaim (Dunn and Mahtani 2001). Minore and Hill (1990) studied the Northern Native Broadcasting Access Program, which focused its efforts on facilitating the broadcasting of culturally relevant programming in the North of Canada, and pointed out how conferral of “First Nations” control over broadcasting in those areas was empowering to its peoples. Roth (1993) examines issues of constituency-group control, ownership, and cross-cultural sharing of First Nations community radio airtime and cultural content (see also Meadows 1996; Valaskakis 1993; Smith and Brigham 1992; Bredin 1991, Lam 1980).

There are mixed feelings among Canadian researchers about the role of ethnic media in challenging problematic minority representation. Lawrence Lam (1980) provides one of the key research projects in this arena. He found, through an analysis of ethnic media consumption, that ethnic media are not important sources of help and information for immigrants. Surlin and Romanov (1985) suggest that ethnic papers create safe places for ethnic cultures to thrive whilst at the same time providing an entrée for newly-arrived immigrants who wish to adapt to their new environment. Black and Leithner (1991; 1987) note that the integration of ethnic minorities into the country’s political process has not decreased despite the fact that there had been a decline in ethnic media consumption. Kim and Kim (1989) echo that claim, insisting that newspapers with a solely ethnic bent may serve to isolate the ethnic community from the rest of Canada. It has been proposed that studies examine the level of Canadian content (or CanCon) in ethnic media as well as explore who actually watches and listens to ethnic media. Suggesting that ethnic media studies are concerned with the process of immigrant adaptation versus institutional accommodation and racial discrimination, Fleras (1994) has pointed out some of the limits with explorations of ethnic media. In particular, he makes the claim that ethnic media has been dismissed as “largely inconsequential in one way or the other as sources of assistance or information about Canada” (Fleras 1994:271). This position mirrors some public and critical sentiments about multiculturalism policy in Canada—a point of view that emphasizes that the policy, driven by an inauthentic celebration of heritage and tradition, is not successful in eradicating racism in Canada. Instead, it is suggested that inequality

of opportunities and stratification continue to be tolerated, endorsed and promoted on the basis of racial and ethnic origins, through government-funded celebrations of cultural traditions like ethnic newspapers which “ghettoize” ethnic enclaves (Mahtani 2000).

D) Media Workers

Media mishandling of minorities is compounded by a pervasive racism, both muted and polite as well as institutional and systemic (Fleras 1994:286).

The practices and routines of the newsroom and other sites of cultural production are increasingly being recognized as spaces where methods of research can be directed (Mahtani forthcoming; Fleras and Kunz 2001; Greenberg 2000; Henry and Tator 2000; Bredin 1993). Research into media worker selections of what are considered to be newsworthy stories has been significant. Researchers have argued that what constitutes news value is judged according to the dominant culture’s interests, using established frameworks of interpretation; this method of evaluation reveals the institutional flaws of the business (see Dunn and Mahtani 2001; Miller 1998; Siddiqui 1993). Furthermore, resource and time pressures which demand decisions made on-the-run only exacerbate the reliance upon such narrow frames. Research on the selection of images for use in television news also reveals the underlying hegemonic ideology. Ungerleider (1991) challenges the conventions of news-gathering in Canada, pointing out how the use of a particular narrative structure, the reliance on the government for stories and sources, and the need to create conflict all contribute to the stereotyping of visible minorities in Canadian news media. Joynt (1995), in an article entitled “Too White,” explores the dearth of visible minorities in the newsroom, citing interview excerpts among Canadian journalists of colour who discuss their exclusion and marginalization within the news organizations themselves. There has been an impassioned plea from researchers in Canada to explore the mechanisms through which distorted and stereotypical representations of ethnic minorities are produced (Fleras and Kunz 2001; Dunn and Mahtani 2001). However, despite this call, few researchers have anchored their analyses in a situated examination of organizational change within the media’s sites of production. Many in this field suggest exploring the social production of what is considered “legitimate knowledge” within media institutions, in order for studies to progress further.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, the under-representation of ethnic minorities was thought at least partly traceable to the cultural make-up of media workers. It was argued that most news journalists were white, middle-class and, until fairly recently, male (Dunn and Mahtani 2001; Miller 1998; Carter, Branston and Allan 1998). Researchers explained that these workers are less able and disposed to access, understand and explain the experiences of non-white-male-elites (Henry 1999; Miller 1998; Roth 1996). Journalists are largely bound by the dominant cultures within which they operate, including embedded societal prejudices, stereotypes, and populist frames of thinking (Chideya 1999). Despite the slowly increasing presence of ‘journalists of colour’ in the 1990s (Mahtani forthcoming), researchers have found that senior media workers (sub-editors, news directors, executive producers, etc.) have remained almost exclusively middle-class males of the dominant

cultures (Carter, Branston and Allan 1998). These media gate-keepers mitigate against attempts by non-white media workers to represent diverse cultural experiences (Dunn and Mahtani 2001). Restricted frames of thinking and decisions about who is considered a “real” Canadian determine which ‘voices of the public’ are collected and broadcast by news media. For example, news workers interviewing “streeters” in a mall make on-the-run choices about whom to approach in order to collect samples of public opinion. These decisions are in part based upon conscious and unconscious decisions about who is and is not considered a part of the national makeup. Such selections reinforce the hegemony of the dominant culture, confirming who has the right to speak about a community or society (Dunn and Mahtani 2001). Many media workers express interest in covering stories that expose racial injustice, but emphasize that these stories are not of interest to senior editors or considered “newsworthy.” As one journalist commented, “Sure, our stories can be racist. But there’s nothing you can do about it. Perhaps when we get promoted, then we can properly infiltrate” (in Mahtani forthcoming).

Numerous research reports have argued that most media workers make decisions about stories and images depending on their own understandings of audience composition (Mahtani forthcoming; Joynt 1995; Miller 1998). Newsmakers work on the premise that the “national audience” shares the same values as they do and that they are programming for “national” interests, even though this “national audience” is nowhere near as homogeneous as the upper echelons of the newsroom, where stories related to ethnic groups are not considered mainstream stories (Dunn and Mahtani 2001; Miller 1998; Ungerleider 1991). As the majority of media workers are white, most media workers assume a mainstream white audience who is like them (Miller 1998), although this number is slowly increasing (Mahtani forthcoming; Henry and Tator 2000). The experiences and events of ethnic minorities are often considered to be too specific to be of general interest, unless there is a story of normative deviance to tell (Henry 1999). Researchers and media workers themselves have called for a greater number of non-white media workers and media and journalism students in order to challenge these prevailing viewpoints (Dunn and Mahtani 2001; Chideya 1995). It has been pointed out that some ethnic minority media workers have expressed discomfort with regard to their role as spokespeople for their particular group. On the one hand, they can be perceived as a community expert to be consulted regarding issues of sensitivity to particular ethnic communities; on the other, they can be seen by their colleagues as compromised or biased regarding issues that touch upon their own cultural background (Dunn and Mahtani 2001; Roth 1996). Many media workers of colour also express uneasiness with the prevailing stereotype that they have only been hired or promoted to please management or fulfill affirmative action requirements (Mahtani forthcoming).

Other researchers and commentators hold out some hope for in-service training or anti-racism pedagogy within the newsroom and the media schools. In a Canadian Race Relations Foundation report on racism in the Canadian print media, Henry and Tator insist that mainstream Canadian journalists need diversity training to avoid racism in their reporting. They recommend that media organizations recruit more minorities in order to accurately portray the multiculturalism of their communities. Many media researchers insist

that this required further study. However, while journalists actively agree that there is a need to more adequately portray minority groups, it seems that many media workers do not believe that there is any value in prepackaged lectures or seminars about diversity that are sometimes included in training programmes (Mahtani forthcoming). Other recommendations include a systematic review of the curricula in journalism schools, greater support for mechanisms monitoring the media, and a higher degree of accountability among media organizations (Henry and Tator 2000).

Researchers have begun to explore how representations of cultural diversity are situated within the context of complex social relations in newsrooms, as well as other sites of media production—where choices for varied representations are made within the rigid constraints of a racialized and often gendered hierarchy (Mahtani forthcoming; Dunn and Mahtani 2001). Ungerleider, Miller and Joynt have examined the whiteness of news institutions. Ungerleider makes the important point that most of the literature on media portrayals of ethnic minorities has been primarily focused on the absence of ethnic minorities in mass media advertising and as protagonists in dramatic series. In an effort to provide new analyses, he turns his gaze towards the Canadian news media and explains that the “under-representation and mis-representation of minorities by news media are not accidental...they are the product of the convergence of the mechanics of news gathering with the desire of those in positions of influence to maintain their privileged positions” (Ungerleider 1991:6). In a report that asked, “can newspapers afford to be that out of touch with their communities?,” a survey conducted by the Canadian Newspaper Association’s Diversity Committee found that of the 41 Canadian newsroom surveyed, only 2.6% of employees are ethnic minorities—five times less than in the general Canadian population (CNA 1994) It contends that fair depiction of ethnic minorities can be achieved without any extra cost—all it takes is leadership. The Committee also insists that there is a direct link between the hiring of minority journalists and the quality of community coverage. John Miller, a professor of Journalism at Ryerson University in Toronto and one of the members of the CNA Editorial Diversity Committee, has identified in another publication how Canada’s daily newspapers shut out minorities, and has demonstrated, through two research projects conducted in 1993, that “in both staffing and in how they depict minorities in print, most of Canada’s dailies are nearly as white as the paper they’re printed on” (Miller 1994:1; see also Miller 1998). In a study published in *The Ryerson Review of Journalism* on the veritable whiteness of news institutions in Canada, Joynt (1995) points out that “Canada has changed...our major dailies haven’t.” Citing interview segments from several journalists of colour, she explains that the “problem of invisibility is discouragingly familiar” (Joynt 1995).

Not unlike those journalists cited in the Joynt article, several on-air news reporters and producers have also expressed their discomfort with the overly white composition of the newsroom in their respective media institutions. South-Asian CITY-TV reporter and producer Irshad Manji (1995) has discussed her own experience in news, explaining that when she sat on the editorial board of *The Ottawa Citizen*, “there were maybe 5 people of colour in the newsroom” (Manji 1995:2). She goes on to suggest that the solution is not simply to hire more ethnic minorities—but to hire more people with anti-racist understandings and a “commitment to being vocal about it” (ibid). Cynthia Reyes, a producer and media change consultant (Reyes is co-founder of ProMedia International), has commented in a letter to *Scan* magazine that “newspapers, magazines, television and radio programmes should be having a field day with all the opportunities presented by [the magnificent diversity that is Canada]. The fact that most media have failed to take advantage of this opportunity on our doorsteps represents a stunning failure.” Discussing the nearly all-white image of the national newsroom, she asks, “where is the colour, where are the accents, where is the diversity of human experience?” (Reyes 2000). Dunn and Mahtani (2001) and Mahtani (forthcoming) interviewed several women journalists, including journalists of colour, to examine their understandings of ethnic minority portrayal in the media. The majority of the interviews echoed the prevailing opinion that there were far too few journalists of colour. The study mapped out practices in the newsroom, in order to situate the struggles taking place within media institutions. Specifically, it explored the shifting contexts of media construction, the knowledge shared among news producers, editors and reporters around issues of racialization, and the lack of ethnic representation among individuals employed in an editorial capacity.

I have provided a general summary of the literature on media representations of minorities in Canada. While these studies have carefully cited and tabulated kinds of portrayals of minorities, I believe that they have provided largely descriptive accounts which do not necessarily explore the causes of such problematic representations, their impact upon understandings of the nation-state, nor potential strategies for challenging absent, negative and stereotypical images. In interviews with experts in this field, it was suggested that future research situate the sites of resistance available to visible minorities to combat such portrayals. Several areas merit research; in the next section, I raise several research questions emerging from this literature review as well as from interviews with media professionals and academics working in this field.

4. Theoretical and Empirical Questions: Possibilities for Future Research

I conducted interviews with media researchers in Canada between January and May 2001 to gauge potential research avenues in the area of media-minority relations. These interviews took place via email questionnaires with academic researchers who were interested in issues of minority representations, and appointed in various departments ranging from Communications, Sociology, Geography, Journalism and History among other disciplines. I also interviewed professionals who work in the media—including media directors in advertising, as well as television and radio producers and reporters. Those who were kind enough to be interviewed and agreed to be named include: Karim Karim, School

of Journalism and Communication at Carleton University; John Miller, Ryerson School of Journalism; Prem Gill, CHUM-TV; Melanie Cishecki, MediaWatch; Augie Fleras, University of Waterloo; Joshua Greenberg, McMaster University; Sean Hier, Ryerson University and McMaster University; Carol Tator, York University; Frances Henry, York University; and Jean Kunz, Human Resources Development Canada. I also interviewed several television and radio producers, editors, production assistants, directors and reporters in Canada, who wished to remain anonymous. Drawing from these interviews, and from my own critique of the literature, I suggest some arenas for future research. There was a general call to alter the focus from previous studies, where we have witnessed a preoccupation with tabulating media's wrongdoings. Without dismissing the importance of these earlier studies, there is an interest in developing other kinds of proposals and recommendations that move beyond criticism of media images of minorities towards a greater understanding of why these stereotypical images are in fact tolerated at all. In particular, there seems to be heightened call to engineer changes within media institutions themselves through quantitative and qualitative studies that analyze media representations of ethnic minorities in the media. The recommendations are as follows.

1. The literature review of the work on media-minority relations underscores some important omissions. Many researchers and media workers made it clear that they want to see more content analysis for a start. Although it is true that our studies have thus far relied upon discourse analysis as the key methodological tool, we do require more detailed studies that employ this method. "[We need] more studies employing critical discourse analysis as the major tool research tool in analyzing all media texts. For example, we would like to research into the electronic media with specific reference to Canadian entertainment programming, i.e. drama and popular entertainment shows," commented two media researchers. We can learn from civil rights groups in the US, who work together to present detailed content analyses of dramas and television sitcoms in ways that garner interest in the national press. For example, a multiethnic coalition that includes the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the National Latino Media Council, the National Asian Pacific American Media Coalition, the National Hispanic Media Coalition, and American Indians in Film, among other groups, work together to provide a "report card" of various network coverage of minorities, insisting that while US networks have taken noticeable measures to bring more diversity to TV, Latino, Asian American and Native American communities remain virtually ignored on sitcoms and dramatic series. These groups are part of a national coalition which recently secured agreements in January 2001 from the four main US networks (ABC, CBS, NBC and Fox). They signed contracts to increase diversity behind and in front of the camera. We should consider funding similar research in Canada to create "report cards" which subsequently could lead to agreements to be signed by Canadian networks.

Apart from the repeated interest in more detailed content analysis studies of Canadian entertainment (including sitcoms, dramatic series and film), the key omissions include analysis of Aboriginal media (see Fraser 1994), and ethnic minority representation in Francophone media. One media researcher pointed out, “We seldom compare English and French media in terms of ethnic diversity.” Another area for further research includes unravelling the role of other identity markers, including gender, sexual orientation, ability, age, socioeconomic status, religion, and regional differences in the consumption and production of stereotypical images. “Gender must be up front and centre in our analyses,” a media worker commented. For example, few studies have examined women of colour’s portrayal in the media (but see Jiwani 1995). Finally, there is an important paucity of work on electronic media. Although Karim (1998) has provided an important introduction to transnational communication networks among diasporic communities and its relation to electronic media, we require further studies that explore the relationship between diasporic formations, identity formation and globalization processes in relation to electronic media. How do minorities consume electronic media? These areas are worthy of further debate and discussion.

2. There is an interest in analyzing how minority groups understand and comprehend their portrayal in the media. In other words, we not only require studies about audience reception to media: we also need to hear from more varied audiences. As evidenced in the literature review, studies about audience response are rare (although see Goldfarb 1995; CAF 1992; Lam 1980). Many of the media researchers insist we require a greater understanding of ethnic minorities’ comprehension of their treatment in the media. What do ethnic minorities expect of the mass media? How do they perceive their treatment? What mechanisms of media scrutiny have ethnic minorities developed, and what has been their impact? What are racialized minorities as a group (not only the elites) saying? This perspective is useful in tabulating particular ethnic groups’ opinions about their portrayal and in citing what other sorts of accounts might be available to the press in portraying these groups. It also has implications in the understanding of the manner in which identities are (re)produced in relation to media portrayals (see recommendation number three). It was proposed in interviews that gender, among other differences, should be examined in relation to the consumption of media products. How do men and women of various minority groups consume media differently, for example?
3. We need to consider other methodological approaches to study media-minority relations and its impact on identity formation. We have relied upon content analysis as the key methodological tool to emphasize that stereotypical images have a demoralizing effect on minority groups. But what images are the most demoralizing to what groups, and in what ways? Karim (1998) has suggested that the impact of media use on identity formation needs to be systematically addressed. Researchers proposed other methodological approaches to consider the relationship between audience consumption, identity formation and minority images. We may consider employing focus groups with various minority groups in order to discern their

interpretations of media images (see the work of Kelly 1998, and Bullock and Jafri 2001). We also need to carry out more interviews with minorities and minority groups in general to discern thoughts and opinions about their representation in the media, in relation to identity formation in particular. We cannot just ask: how do minorities feel about their portrayal in the media? We also need to systematically question how negative images of minorities impact their self-identity and esteem. As suggested in recommendation number two, audience interpretations of media representations are an important part of media analysis and have serious implications for notions of belonging. Although we have begun to consider this relationship, we should encourage more studies in this vein.

4. By treating minority groups as homogeneous entities, we are ignoring other facets of identity that play a role in minority consumption of media. Individuals who identify within a minority group are not identical. For example, there is a wide range of diversity within the rubric of what we dub the “Iranian” community, including sexual orientation, gender, class and age, among others. This has implications for the consumption of media images as well. The “mixed race” community provides another example. Within the community of “mixed race” people (or multiethnic or biracial among other terms), there are obviously differences, one of them being age. “While it appears that older immigrants prefer content exclusively related to their cultural backgrounds, younger ones seem to want a broader variety,” writes Karim (1998). Using these categories as self-evident labels for analysis creates exclusionary effects and reflects an assumption that all people who identify within a minority group share identical experiences when in fact they do not (see Mahtani 2001). We need further studies that explore the relationship between identity formation, minority images and the variations within different minority communities (see, for example, McAuliffe’s current project analyzing the influence of media representations of immigration issues on the negotiation of identity by the children of Iranian immigrants in Sydney and Vancouver. His study begins to separate the multifaceted differences between members of that community.) Given the variety between members of various minority groups, we also need to consider how people who identify themselves as members of more than one minority group contemplate their portrayal in media accounts. Karim states, “the hybridity of cultural production and of multilayered identities have major implications for cultural/multicultural and broadcasting policies, especially within the context of globalization” (Karim 1998). We have yet to complete a study about the ways in which “mixed-race” Canadians contemplate their portrayal in the Canadian media, for example, or a study about Francophones who also identify within various minority groups, such as Greek-Francophones or South-Asian Francophones.
5. This is largely an interdisciplinary field. Although the field is growing exponentially in Canada, we need to bring together this widely varied group of scholars working in Communication Studies, Ethnic Studies, Women’s Studies, Sociology, Canadian Studies, Psychology, Cultural Studies and Geography, among other disciplines, to garner a sense of the debates and discussions. At the moment, it is disparate. I would suggest a conference or a book publication (Karim Karim is currently undertaking such

a project), bringing these different threads together to pool our knowledge.³ There is also ongoing need for such initiatives, not only with Metropolis but also with government institutions like CRTC, Canadian Heritage, as well as other organizations like MediaWatch, CHUM-TV, and the CBC.

6. We require a more precise examination of the role of ethnic media in combatting negative portrayals of minorities in the media. In particular, how do ethnic media affect the mainstream press? Several researchers insisted that this is a key question for future research. Fraser (1994) has suggested the importance of researching ethnically-based cultural industries that give voice to minority groups. However, it remains an open question as to whether or not ethnic media is consumed and disseminated by other larger media organizations. Many of the stories in the ethnic press rarely make it into mainstream media newspapers or television reports and are effectively ghettoized and segregated. We need to discover ways for these stories to “break” in larger mainstream organizations such as *The Globe and Mail*, *The National Post*, CTV and CBC. In interviews for this paper, many mainstream media workers stated that they rarely use ethnic media as a source of information. Why are ethnic newspapers and programmes not of interest to mainstream media workers? We also need to ask how ethnic media and media watch dogs perceive and construct members of their own group. It has been suggested that ethnic media representations do not always provide positive readings of their ethnic group (Mahtani and Mountz 2001). Thus, how should ethnic media constructions be judged? Should self-generated but often essentialist constructions be examined with the same critical eye as negative media portrayals?
7. Do mainstream media organizations in Canada continue to perceive their audience as white mainstream, or is there an acceptance of a multifarious audience? Mahtani (forthcoming) has explored this topic with Australian (SBS) and New Zealand broadcasters. We may well want to complete similar research here in Canada. How do the mainstream media think about their audience? Who do they think are watching and consuming their media? What do they see as the impact of their perceptions of their audience versus their actual demographic? What are the steps being taken to address this diverse audience? If advertisers are beginning to realize that minorities have growing spending power, we need to find out if other Canadian mass media sources are recognizing the consuming potential of minority groups.
8. Researchers have effectively pointed out the media’s wrongdoings. We have yet to explore the ways the media “does it right.” Our history of research in this area bears out this claim. Many of our content analyses have focused upon citing negative images. Our discourse analyses may well become more nuanced through a tabulation of positive images as well. We should conduct case studies and interviews with producers and reporters at programmes that have made their focus targeting a

³ Multiculturalism Canada provided the funding for an international workshop at the Metropolis Conference in Vancouver, 2000. See website: www.canada.metropolis.net for more details.

diverse audience, making it their mandate to accurately portray minorities—namely, CITY-TV and CHUM-TV. We may well work together towards sharing our knowledge to ensure more equitable representations of minorities. Focus groups with various minority groups may well be useful here. We could ask: when does the media reflect and illuminate issues of diversity? What is the impact of those positive representations upon minority self-esteem and identity formation? We could also take a page out of the “Let’s Do It Better” workshop on race and ethnicity for professional journalists at Columbia University in the United States, where strong examples of racial and ethnic coverage in America are showcased in order to provoke discussion and spur changes in newsroom agendas (Morgan 2001). Supported by a grant from the Ford Foundation, this project brings together journalists who submit their work to a committee who then choose stories that best illustrate the ways race is lived and experienced in the United States. I recommend that we consider implementing such a program in Canada. This program may prove intriguing to journalists who are wary of diversity training programs but who make it clear that they are interested in learning, from their peers, methods of improving ethnic and racial coverage (Mahtani forthcoming).

9. Which discourses of nationalism pervade media discussions of ethnic minorities? While researchers have analyzed the mis-representation and under-representation of minority groups, we have yet to fully unravel the particular discourses of whiteness, biculturalism, and nationalism that lurk below the surface of the perpetuation of these representations. Very few studies examine the role of biculturality, bilingualism, and religious diversity in the media. This area demands further research and may well be complemented by comparative projects (like Hier’s current research on media representations of “illegal migrants” in a comparative context). The role of the CRTC and its relationship to equitable media portrayal of minorities is another area that is worthy of additional study. What is the relationship between the CRTC, definitions of Canadianness and the granting of “multicultural” channels, for example?
10. What has been the structural impact of official multiculturalism on media representations of minorities? How has the legacy of multiculturalism affected minority images? Although it is assumed that media representations of minorities are more positive in multicultural societies, many critical race theorists suggest that complex forms of racism can emerge in countries where official multiculturalism is legislated (Bhabha 1994). Canadian multicultural policy, as a backdrop for Canadian identity, often ensures that forms of institutionalized racism are rendered invisible. How is this manifest in newsrooms and networks across Canada? One media researcher recommended audience research related to issues of national identity and media content. In particular, he suggested:

What kinds of cultural meanings do new immigrants (and non-English speaking Canadians) construct in relation to their viewing of media content with an underlying theme of nationalism—for example, Olympic sports, constitutional referenda, federal political campaigns?

One possible avenue for research may be interviewing those individuals who have been adversely affected by negative ethnic minority portrayals, in order to better gauge the role the media play in encouraging or discouraging multicultural guidelines. Although there are examples of excellent media monitoring studies (see Greenberg 2000), many media researchers insisted that we need to complete more projects that identify the role of multiculturalism in impeding or facilitating diversity in media accounts. For example, media researchers recommended critiquing the efficacy of public education campaigns, funded by the government to promote multiculturalism and anti-racism, and designed to influence and/or change Canadian attitudes about race in Canada. Have public campaigns, videos, posters and advertisements that disparage racism and discrimination resulted in a decline of hate crimes and prejudice? Again, how do minority groups feel about these campaigns? Here we could work with the Canadian Race Relations Foundation, mainstream media organizations and March 21st Secretariat/Multiculturalism Programs to conduct further research.

11. Several media researchers observe the need to examine the discourses on ethnic minorities that prevail in newsrooms in Canada. Unfortunately, few of us have had the opportunity to conduct interviews with media workers, primarily because of the difficulty in acquiring access, and because many media workers have expressed concerns over confidentiality (Mahtani forthcoming). More than any other area, researchers insisted on the importance of anchoring studies of ethnic minority representation through a situated analysis of organizational and behavioral practices within the media's sites of production. In interviews with media researchers, it was suggested that we go straight "to the source"—the media organizations themselves—in order to better comprehend why these negative portrayals proliferate. We need to extend existing studies by interviewing media professionals—especially journalists—to understand the mechanisms through which distorted and stereotypical representations are produced. Who makes decisions regarding media representations of minorities? What is the relationship between institutional representation and media representation of minorities? Are ethnic minorities involved in the production of these images? Does it make a difference if there are more ethnic minorities working in media production, or are they effectively silenced in the newsroom, as some suggest (Mahtani forthcoming; Henry and Tator 2000; Henry 1999)? In other words, what are the experiences of media workers of colour? A media researcher suggested "focusing upon the experiences of minority newsmakers who work in relatively homogeneous workplaces...does the question of ethnic identity figure more strongly for minority media practitioners than for white practitioners?" John Miller recommended conducting a similar study in his own 1994 analysis of the institutional representation of minorities. Others agreed, proposing quantitative analysis projects that would help us acquire more statistics on the number of minorities behind the scenes at various

media organizations. One media worker asked: “How many senior executives, programmers, directors, editors, etc., are visible, ethnic, religious minorities? Assuming that these numbers are small, how do we change them?” We can also learn from several in-depth government-sponsored American studies that have examined minority representation in the media. For example, the Kerner Report, commissioned by Lyndon Johnson in 1967 to study the relationship between the ongoing race riots in the US and the media, proved to be invaluable in its assessment that distorted and inadequate coverage of race relations was largely contributing to continued African-American despair and alienation (Newkirk 2000). We could contemplate the possibility of similar studies in Canada. Finally, there are no clear guidelines or codes for media workers as regards equitable representations of minorities in Canada. We may want to work with prominent experienced minority journalists and media workers to draft anti-racist codes for media practitioners. For example, Freedom Forum has produced a guidebook that has gained professional acclaim, entitled “Best Practices for Television Journalists,” that includes a section on bias and race (Westin 2000). We could commission Canadian journalists and media researchers, including change consultants like Hamlin Grange and Cynthia Reyes, to work together to produce a similar handbook. Again, in my own research, journalists expressed interest in acquiring such a guidebook and made it expressly clear that do not want to rely upon American manuals (Mahtani forthcoming).

12. Drawing from the previous recommendation, there is a need for media researchers to work more closely with media organizations themselves. Of course, this is no easy task, given the “closed shop” mentality of various media organizations. However, we must encourage liaisons with media workers, and stress that their representations do have an impact in curtailing cultural citizenship in Canada. A key problem is that media professionals often do not realize that their representations mis-represent or under-represent minority groups (Dunn and Mahtani 2001; Mahtani forthcoming). When they do realize that representations are problematic, the following laissez-faire attitude is often expressed: the very problem of minority representation is so entrenched within the structure of the media organization itself, it is almost impossible to combat. Therefore, we need to find ways to reach media workers, and present our findings in an accessible format—outside of our academic journal papers—in order to encourage other kinds of representations and to propose the possibility of diversity training that will be useful to them. Henry and Tator (1999) have been particularly effective on this front, producing summary reports and one-page analyses for various mainstream media organizations.

We could again turn to the US for examples of prominent successful academic-media worker liaisons that we might implement here in Canada. For example, the University of Southern California Annenberg School for Communication’s Western Knight Center for Specialized Journalism offers a seminar fellowship series to teach journalists about equitable coverage of immigration issues. In this seminar, journalists learn about current immigration patterns, policy and predictions for future reform, analysis of recent 2000 Census data on both legal and illegal immigration, impacts of immigration

on local social and political structures such as public schools, and cultural and social integration, among other topics. Such a seminar demystifies immigration figures and numbers, provides journalists with an opportunity to understand the context and content of policies, and gives journalists a chance to discuss, amongst themselves and with academic immigration experts, the ways they comprehend and report on race in America. There is no reason why we cannot implement a similar seminar with the assistance of experts, through Metropolis, for example. We can encourage ongoing engagement with other diversity training groups (like ProMedia International) to pool and share our knowledge and facilitate its implementation.

13. Several media researchers recommended more theoretical examinations in the field. As mentioned earlier, the majority of the literature on minority relations and media has been dominated by a dualistic framework of under-representation or misrepresentation. One media researcher suggested a thorough excavation of communication pedagogy in Canada: “What kind of framework does communication education assume in Canada? What kinds of issues might this give rise to in relation to critical communication scholarship? An examination of television production courses and textbooks, complemented by interviews with white and non-white media practitioners would facilitate this type of scholarship.” Our theory, as several researchers pointed out in interviews, is sorely lagging behind developments taking place in the US and the UK.
14. How does the growing monopoly of media ownership affect equitable representations of minorities? This is a particularly salient issue in this country, given the tightening of media budgets from coast to coast and continual layoffs at various newspaper presses. How does this affect the stories Canadians see and hear about ethnic minorities? What are the ramifications for rural towns when the stories they read about in the local paper are only available from mainstream Canadian Press (Mahtani and Mountz 2001)? What is the relationship between minority representation and mass ownership of media organizations? (Winter 1997). It has been suggested that the cost of accurate portrayals is not high (Miller 1998; Dunn and Mahtani 2001). We may well investigate this issue through qualitative, in depth, open-ended interviews with media workers in this country. Some researchers suggested projects that would examine how our media products sell across the border and around the world. It has been surmised that media products with greater ethnic diversity sell better abroad. We require research that explores the relationship between sales and the portrayal of equitable ethnic diversity in media.

5. Conclusion: Moving Beyond Blame Towards Solutions And Strategies

This paper insists that the ways the media portray and report on minority groups in Canada greatly affect the ways the public perceives minority groups in Canadian society. Varied research across disciplines demonstrates that minorities are regularly stereotyped in mass media. Media images can promote attitudes of tolerance and harmony, or fear and negativity. When media representations fail to represent Canada's minorities with sensitivity, the entire country suffers the consequences. Our task as researcher should be to create a "united front" against the preponderance of these stereotypical images by enhancing our current discourse analysis projects, coupled by further studies with media workers to examine the reasons lurking behind the continued proliferation of these images. Media workers need to consider and create alternative representations of minorities and it may well be our task to develop alliances with them to provoke other sorts of images. Researchers interviewed for this report have recommended routes for research through new methodological approaches that will serve as a means towards more inclusive and equitable representations of minorities in Canadian media, wherein minorities would no longer be marginalized but imagined as an integral part of the Canadian nation-state.

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