

The International  
**JOURNAL**  
*of*  
**DIVERSITY**  
*in* ORGANISATIONS,  
COMMUNITIES  
& NATIONS

Who's Telling The News?

John Miller

VOLUME 5

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF DIVERSITY IN ORGANISATIONS, COMMUNITIES AND NATIONS  
<http://www.Diversity-Journal.com>

First published in 2005/2006 in Melbourne, Australia by Common Ground Publishing Pty Ltd  
[www.CommonGroundPublishing.com](http://www.CommonGroundPublishing.com).

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ISSN: 1447-9532 (print), 1447-9583 (online)  
Publisher Site: <http://www.Diversity-Journal.com>

The INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF DIVERSITY IN ORGANISATIONS, COMMUNITIES AND NATIONS is a peer refereed journal. Full papers submitted for publication are refereed by Associate Editors through anonymous referee processes.

Typeset in Common Ground Markup Language using CGCreator multichannel typesetting system  
<http://www.CommonGroundSoftware.com>.

# Who's Telling The News?

## Racial Representation Among News Gatherers in Canada's Daily Newsrooms

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*Abstract: Canada is the first nation in the world to enshrine official multiculturalism in its constitution. Twenty years later, multiculturalism helps define the country's national identity in the eyes of the world. But not all institutions have contributed equally to what one academic hopefully calls "the multicultural reconstruction of Canadian society." One such institution is the country's 102 daily newspapers, which millions of Canadians rely on to be their windows on social change. Public awareness of issues related to social cohesion relies on fair, accurate and inclusive coverage by the media. So who's telling the news? In summer, 2004, managing editors at 37 Canadian daily newspapers provided demographic data on their newsgathering staffs. This "census" focused on racial minorities and women. The data was compared to a similar survey in 1994, when the diversity of Canada's population was much lower. The findings of the 2004 survey shows that racial minorities are more than five times under-represented in daily newsrooms. Moreover, the commitment of editors to change their hiring patterns has declined, not risen, in 10 years. This study addresses what other academics have identified as a neglected area of research. The misrepresentation of non-whites in news coverage has been well documented; less so has the racial representation of those who report and edit the news. The findings of this study raise important issues for social cohesion in a country that is heavily reliant on immigration and highly committed to building a multicultural society.*

Keywords: Newspapers, Canada, Racial minorities, Aboriginals, Demographics, Representation, Social cohesion

**I**N THE DECADE between 1991 and 2001, Canada's population underwent profound demographic change. The percentage of Canadians who identify themselves as either Aboriginal or visible minority increased from 11.7 to 16.7. This was mainly due to three unprecedented factors: High immigration from non-white countries, a low birth rate among Canadian-born adults, and a 50 per cent increase in the number of Canadians who identify themselves as Aboriginal (from 625,710 in 1991 to 976,305 in the 2001 census).

This trend will accelerate, according to Statistics Canada. Roughly one out of every five people in Canada, or between 19 and 23 percent, is expected to be a member of a visible minority by 2017, when Canada celebrates its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Along with the increased numbers, settlement patterns changed. Non-whites spread out from their traditional Toronto-Vancouver-Montreal concentrations. An analysis of Statistics Canada census data shows that 28 communities in five provinces have non-white populations of more than 20 percent, including Port Moody, B.C., Calgary, Winnipeg, Markham, Mississauga and Saint-Laurent, Quebec. Several others are approaching that point.

This has put pressure for change on many major institutions across Canada, which was the first country in the world to enshrine official multiculturalism in its constitution. Educational and financial institutions, the justice system and police forces, and

major industries are facing demands to better reflect these changing demographics in their workplaces. Some are doing it proactively, because they recognize the business case for diversity, and are tapping in to the fastest growing segment of our society. Others recognize that in an environment that is increasingly global, diversity in the workplace leads to creativity in the market. Other institutions fall under the federal Employment Equity Act, and are required to report every year on their workplace demographics and hiring strategies.

Not all institutions have contributed equally to what one academic hopefully calls "the multicultural reconstruction of Canadian society." (Fleras 1995, 406) One such institution is the mass media, which millions of Canadians rely on to be their window on societal change. Dismayed by what they see as stereotypical or non-inclusive coverage, racial minority communities (as women did before them) have criticized how newspapers, television stations and advertisers depict them. Some critics point to the fact that newsrooms are still largely dominated by white males at a time when the communities they cover are increasingly diverse (Gist 2000; Henry and Tator 2000).

While they still have a long way to go to mirror the diversity in their communities, some media organizations are getting the message. A key catalyst for change has been the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, which regu-



lates broadcasters. As a condition of license renewal, the CRTC expects television networks to fulfil obligations under the Broadcast Act to fairly depict Canada's multicultural society. Eighteen years of compliance with the Employment Equity Act has forced federally regulated companies, such as broadcasters, to address the diversity of their work forces. Some progress, in the form of increased representation on air, is evident on nightly television news.

Less is happening in the offices of daily newspapers which, with their larger news-gathering staffs and more local focus, still set the news agenda for the Canadian media. Newspapers are not regulated like broadcasters nor do they fall under equity legislation. Many do not even formally compile statistics on the gender and race of their employees. As multicultural groups reach critical mass in many communities, they look first to daily newspapers to reflect their reality, and many do not like what they see (Goldfarb 1995).

Content and discourse analyses have identified problems and blind spots in news coverage (Henry and Tator 2002; Miller 1998). This study examines staffing: Who's telling the news? news:How many racial minorities and Aboriginals gather the news for Canada's daily newspapers? Does their representation in newsrooms match the levels in their communities? Is there diversity through the ranks, among supervising editors as well as reporters, copy editors, and photographers? Do hiring editors have a strong commitment to making their staffs more representative? Do recent hiring trends show progress in that regard? Are newspapers feeling pressure from their communities to change? If so, how many are doing something about it?

## Previous Research

Little research has been done to determine the racial diversity of Canada's news gatherers, particularly those working for daily newspapers. The only comprehensive study (Canadian Daily Newspaper Association 1994) identified serious under-representation in 41 newsrooms, where only 67 (2.6 %) of 2,620 news professionals were identified as non-white. The CDNA census was based on questionnaires returned by managing editors. The industry association, since renamed the Canadian Newspaper Association, has not done another survey since.

This under-representation of visible minorities and Aboriginals in the news media has been partially confirmed by a more recent survey that attempted to provide a demographic profile of Canadian journalists across all media (Sauvageau and Pritchard 1998). Their study relied on interviews with 554 randomly selected journalists from daily and community newspapers, television and radio stations, and found

that the typical Canadian journalist was white (97 %) and male (72 %). It did not break respondents down into job categories, so there is no way of knowing how many were news gatherers (reporters, photographers) and how many were news managers, who decide what news gets covered.

Although Sauvageau and Pritchard found almost no variance in racial representation between newspaper journalists and those working in broadcasting, there is other evidence that minority representation tends to vary by news medium and by whether the news outlet operates in French or English. A content analysis done on 329.5 hours of news programming on Canada's private television stations (Canadian Association of Broadcasters 2004) found that visible minorities represent 12.3 per cent of all appearances as anchors/hosts for English-language news. The comparable figure in French-language news programs was zero percent. The report compared these figures to the percentage of ethnic, racial and Aboriginal groups in the population: 19.3 in provinces outside Quebec; 7.9 in Quebec.

The content analysis done for the CAB did not look beyond what appears on the screen. No census was done to identify how many minorities make news decisions behind the scenes for Canada's private broadcasters. But it did identify significant gaps in coverage, particularly of Canadians of Chinese, Vietnamese, Filipino and Korean descent; and of Aboriginal Canadians, whose on-screen presence was less than 1 percent of the total, or one-third of their share of the Canadian population. Focus group participants interviewed as part of the research felt that the depiction of people from ethnocultural or Aboriginal backgrounds is often unbalanced. As a result of its research, the CAB became the first media industry group to adopt the goal of reflecting Canada's diversity in its programming and workforce, and endorsed a series of "best practices" to measure progress.

The United States is the leading country in measuring newsroom diversity and for naming diversity as a top priority. The American Society of Newspaper Editors conducts an annual census of America's daily newspapers to measure the progress of minority journalists. The ASNE says its survey is a tool to measure progress towards its goal of having the percentage of minorities working in newsrooms equal to the percentage of minorities in the U.S. population by 2025. Minorities now make up 12.9 percent of newsrooms and 31.7 percent of the U.S. population (ASNE 2004).

In his book *The Global Journalist*, David Weaver says race and gender in newsrooms has not received the study that it deserves. Fewer than half of the countries and territories in Weaver's study reported a figure for racial and ethnic minority journalists,

forcing him to conclude that little research has been done globally on this subject. Available data show the percentage of minority journalists is small, ranging from 1 percent to 11 percent (Weaver 1998). Weaver suggests the low figures reinforce the notion that journalists come predominantly from the established and dominant cultural groups in society. "This seems to hold true especially in Taiwan, Britain, and Canada and somewhat less so in Brazil, China, and the United States." (Weaver, 460).

Canadian scholars (Fleras and Kuntz 2001; Mahtani 2001) have called for more research into understanding the mechanisms through which distorted and stereotypical representations of ethnic minorities are produced in the media. In particular, there has been little done to investigate any direct correlation between the representation of visible minorities in newsrooms and the resulting news coverage. The argument for proportional representation of minority journalists rests on an assumption – that it will lead to more sensitive, more accurate coverage (Pritchard and Brzezinski 2004). Some scholars (Miljan and Cooper 2003) contend that the background and attitudes of individual journalists primarily influence how they cover the news, although their research surprisingly does not consider race a relevant factor. Others (Fleras and Kunz 2001) argue that race and gender don't matter as much as other factors: Journalists are still largely bound by the dominant cultures within which they operate, and adopt embedded prejudices, stereotypes and populist frames of thinking. Still others (Fleras 2004) argue that the problematizing of minorities by mainstream news media is systemic and structural, not individual and attitudinal. This would tend to make it harder to identify and discuss, since the biases would be unconscious ones.

The most influential study to link minority portrayal and hiring was the 1968 report of the Kerner Commission, formed by President Lyndon Johnson to explain the causes of the urban riots that swept the United States in the mid-1960s. It blamed the media for their failure to adequately report on black life and hire black journalists (Kerner 1968). That finding caused ASNE to start its impressive diversity effort, including the annual census of newspaper newsrooms.

Canadian research (Miller and Prince 1994) has measured the gap between the amount of newspaper coverage about minorities and their percentage in the population. An examination of photographs and news stories in six large Canadian newspapers found that coverage of minorities generally lagged behind their representation in society. The only exception was at the Montreal Gazette, where the news staff was deliberately reaching out to minority communities in an attempt to build circulation.

This effort – or the lack of it – seems to be noticed by minority communities. A 1995 focus group study conducted for the Canadian Daily Newspaper Association found that over half of the ethnic minorities surveyed felt like they were either ignored or treated like foreigners in daily newspapers (Goldfarb 1995).

Two U.S. content analysis studies assessed the tone of coverage of minorities and compared it to prevailing attitudes and routines in newsrooms. Gist studied the effect of minority representation on news coverage at two U.S. newspapers where there was a gap of at least 10 percent between percentage of minorities in the newsroom and the community. Most coverage of minorities was negative. She suggests a reason: Determination of news is highly subjective, and "news judgment inevitably reflects the perceptual biases and cultural anchors of those making the judgement." (2000, 56)

A more comprehensive study attempted to find the "connection between the climate in the newsroom regarding race and ethnicity, and the content of the newspaper or evening newscast" (Pease, Smith, and Subervi 2001, 7). While a "straight-line" correlation wasn't established between the diversity of the staff and the diversity of the news product, the researchers found that "it does seem clear the degree to which news managers can communicate their vision regarding diversity to the newsroom, and the degree to which the journalists and other employees buy into that vision, heavily influence whether news coverage will include the full diversity of the communities journalists serve" (2001, 9). This seems to support the view that under-representation and misrepresentation of minorities by the news media are not accidental; rather, they are messages conveyed to society by people who work for profitable corporations that share a strong interest in maintaining the way of life of the majority culture (Ungerleider 1991).

Focus groups interviewed for the CAB's Task Force on Cultural Diversity were unanimous in saying that it is essential to reflect Canada's diversity on television. Doing so fosters a sense of self-esteem and belonging. Lack of minorities in decision-making positions in newsrooms was identified as a major barrier to cross-cultural understanding and coverage. "There was also a consensus that while representation has improved over the past five to 10 years, there is a clear desire for more: more representation, and more accurate portrayal." (Canadian Association of Broadcasters 2004, 25)

## Research Method

A questionnaire was developed to allow for statistical comparison to the 1994 report done by Miller and Prince for the Canadian Daily Newspaper Association. We divided news gatherers into four main

categories, and listed seven of the largest racial minority groups as defined by Statistics Canada. Our intention was to compare the diversity of news professionals to the diversity of the population as determined by the most recent Canadian census, in 2001.

Other questions coincided with ones in the 1994 CDNA report: How much hiring has your paper done in the past year; how strong is your commitment to hire more racial minorities in your newsroom; has your paper been approached by any racial minority group in the past year to discuss coverage; and describe any initiatives you have taken on coverage or hiring of non-whites. Two questions were designed to get at whether the editors felt that any newsroom traditions or culture are impeding the hiring and progress of minorities; and whether they feel their top managers need more background knowledge on race and ethnocultural relations to effectively manage a newsroom.

Respondents were also asked if they agreed or disagreed with several reasons cited most often by editors in the 1994 survey to explain the low numbers of visible minorities in their newsrooms, including "People of different races just do not apply here" and "The journalism schools don't supply them."

A list of managing editors was obtained from the Canadian Association of Newspaper Editors, which agreed to endorse the survey. Since the CANE list was incomplete, we used newspaper websites to identify others at key papers, eventually compiling a list of the chief newsroom editors of 96 of the country's 102 daily newspapers published in either English or French.

Copies of the survey, translated into French for the newspapers on the list published in that language, were mailed out between the last week in May and the middle of June, 2004. The editors were promised that their papers would not be identified individually when the results of the survey were compiled. This was done to get the largest response possible, and to

match the instructions given 10 years before. When an editor requested the survey by e-mail, that was done. Follow-up was handled by phone and e-mail when the initial deadline of June 15 expired. A second mailing of the survey was conducted in July, to overcome any disruption caused by the campaign for the Canadian federal election, held in late June. Newspapers that did not respond were contacted at least three times by phone or e-mail.

Thirty-seven newspapers completed the questionnaires, a response rate of 38 percent. This compared to the 41 of 82 papers (50 %) that responded in 1994. The shortfall was largely due to the decision by head office of CanWest Publications Inc. not to allow most of its 13 daily s to participate. Those reasons are discussed below. It was also disappointing that only two French-language newspapers participated, just one more than participated in 1994.

Responses were compiled in three main circulation categories, and included 9 of the 17 Canadian dailies with circulations over 100,000; 8 of the 27 with circulations between 25,000 and 100,000; and 20 of 58 with circulations under 25,000.

### Findings and Analysis

Non-whites constitute 3.4 percent of the newsgathering staffs of 37 papers that returned questionnaires, compared to 2.6 percent of staff at papers that responded to a similar survey in 1994. However, news:he gains do not keep pace with the huge increase of visible minorities and Aboriginal people in the Canadian population in that period. People of colour made up 16.7 percent of the population in the 2001 Canada Census, up from 11.7 percent in 1991. Moreover, significant gaps in minority employment exist in all circulation groupings, not just at the biggest papers (see Chart 1). On average, at any given daily newsroom in the country, minorities are more than six times under-represented.

**Chart One: Minorities in Community vs. Newsroom Large gaps exist in every circulation category.**

Circulation	% Minorities in Population	% Minorities in Newsroom
Over 100,000	24.7	4.1
25,000- 100,000	14.5	2.2
Under 25,000	6.9	1.0

Only 72 minorities were identified by managing editors as being on staff at 37 daily newspapers in all 10 provinces. Total staff at those papers was 2,119. This compared to 41 papers that answered a similar questionnaire in 1994, identifying 67 minorities in a total staff of 2,620. The difference in staff size is accounted for by the fact that some large newspapers that reported in 1994 chose not to do so this time. In fact, 21 newspapers in the 1994 survey did not return

questionnaires this time. This made direct comparison difficult. To get an indication of how much has changed in newsrooms in 10 years, we identified newspapers that answered both questionnaires, and compared their newsroom staffing for diversity and gender over the 10-year period. This included six papers in the over-100,000 circulation group, three in the 25,000-100,000 group, and 10 in the under-25,000 circulation group.

In this direct paper-to-paper comparison, 57 of the 61 minority journalists identified work for the largest newspapers, with the biggest gains being in the job category of reporter (31 positions, up from 12). Minority managers – those key people who set the news agenda – seem to be more scarce at the largest papers than they were in 1994. Minorities also seem to have less presence than they did 10 years ago at the three medium (25,000-100,000 circulation) newspapers that we compared. They remain largely excluded from the staffs of under-25,000 circulation papers. This seems to indicate that minorities do not benefit from the traditional training ground that reporters, editors and photographers find at smaller papers.

What's interesting in this comparison is the decline in the total number of jobs in the newsrooms of medium and small newspapers in the last 10 years. While the staffs of the larger metropolitan papers have increased, there are 35 percent fewer supervising editors at the same under-25,000 circulation

papers than there were in 1994; at medium-sized papers, the reporting staff has been cut by 31 percent and copy editors by 37 percent. Overall staff levels at the medium-sized papers have been cut by nearly one-third.

When we look more closely at the 72 minority journalists identified as full-time news gatherers at the 37 newspapers, we see some notable under-representations (see Chart 2). Chinese were the largest minority grouping, with 27 journalists employed, followed by 16 South Asians and an equal number of Blacks. But there was only one journalist representing the second-largest non-white group in the general population – Aboriginal people, at 3.29 percent. That means Aboriginal Canadians are 70 times less likely to be employed by daily newspapers than their numbers in society would seem to warrant, a shockingly bad inclusion rate and one that may help explain the endemic stereotyping and marginalization of native people in the press.

**Chart Two: Racial Groups in Newsrooms**

Racial Group	Total number of positions in 2004	Total number of positions in 1994	Change
South Asian	16	13	+3
Chinese	27	17	+10
Black	16	16	0
Filipino <sup>1</sup>	3	-	-
Arab/West Asian 1	2	-	-
Latin American	3	2	+1
Aboriginal	1	4	-3
Other <sup>2</sup>	4	15	-11

<sup>1</sup>Not measured in 1994.

<sup>2</sup>Other included Filipino and Arab/West Asian in 1994.

Given the slow progress women have made in reaching critical mass in newsrooms (Robinson and Saint-Jean, 1998), it is useful to study recent hiring trends to see if the same pattern may be facing minority journalists. Editors were asked to account for their full-time and part-time newsroom hiring for the past year. As we see (Chart 3) editors in all three circulation groupings did considerable hiring during this time, but hiring diversity was only evident in the large and medium newsrooms, and more often for part-time positions than permanent, full-time jobs. All 17 full-time and 35 part-time hires at under-

25,000 circulation newspapers were white. In fact, 22 out of 37 newspapers (59 %) reported all-white staffs in 2004, up from 16 of 41 (39 %) in 1994. In the United States, where this has been monitored since 1978, only 34 percent of newsrooms still are all-white (Dedman and Doig 2004).

It's interesting to note that, although the newspapers collectively hired 89 full-time and 192 part-time newsroom staff in the past year, nearly half (16 of 37) agreed with the statement that "we're not hiring anyone."

**Chart Three: Hiring in last year How many minorities did you hire for full-time and part-time positions?**

Type of Position	Circulation Category	Over 100,000	25,000-100,000	Under 25,000
Full-time	Total Hires	49	23	17
	Minorities	5	2	0
	% Minorities	10.2	8.7	0
Part-time	Total Hires	125	32	35
	Minorities	27	4	0
	% Minorities	21.6	12.5	0

What is the commitment to hire minorities at daily newspapers? In contrast to 1994, when 26.8 percent of editors in all three circulation groups said they had a “very strong” desire to hire a diverse staff, only 13.5 percent felt the same way in 2004. The largest dropoff was in medium papers (see Chart 4). The

most common reason given by the papers is that they “hire the best person regardless of race or gender.” Most often, the “best person” was white. Many papers said there aren’t enough minorities in their area for diversity to be an issue.

**Chart Four: Commitment to hire How strong is your commitment to hire more racial minorities in your newsroom?**

Level of Commitment	Circulation Group	2004	1994
Very Strong (%)	Over 100,000	33.3	45.5
	25,000-100,000	12.5	40.0
	Under 25,000	5.0	10.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>13.5</b>	<b>26.8</b>
Somewhat Strong (%)	Over 100,000	66.7	45.5
	25,000-100,000	37.5	40.0
	Under 25,000	45.0	45.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>48.7</b>	<b>43.9</b>
Not Very Strong (%)	Over 100,000	0	9.1
	25,000-100,000	25	20.0
	Under 25,000	45	40.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>29.7</b>	<b>26.8</b>

A majority of managing editors agreed with the statement that “minorities just don’t apply here.” Yet only one mentioned taking any steps to ensure that it was attracting minority candidates, such as recruiting at journalism schools or ethnic publications. None said they were training existing staff, including minorities, to take newsroom leadership roles. The responsibility for getting jobs seems to be shifted to the minority journalists rather than taken on as a re-

cruiting challenge for the paper. Asked how minorities could improve their chances of getting hired, the editors most often said “just apply.”

The questionnaire also asked if editors felt their newsroom’s tradition and culture are impeding the hiring and progress of minorities, and they were almost unanimous: No, it was not (see Chart 5).

**Chart Five: Impact of Newsroom Culture**

**Do you feel your newsroom's tradition and culture are impeding the hiring and progress of minorities?**

Circulation Category	Yes (%)	No (%)
Over 100,000	0	100.0
25,000- 100,000 <sup>1</sup>	0	87.5
Under 25,000 <sup>1</sup>	10	85.0

<sup>1</sup>The missing percentages are from papers in the category not answering the question.

When asked what is standing in the way of minorities being hired, 54 percent of the papers cited a lack of minority applicants, and 34 percent cited minimal hiring and low turnover of existing staff. Only two papers said there were no problems standing in the way.

The best stimulus for a newspaper to take initiatives to improve coverage of minorities is the most obvious one: When it gets complaints about coverage. There was a very close correlation between the

number of papers reporting such initiatives and the number that had been approached by one or more racial minority groups within the past year to discuss coverage. Most often, the reason for the approach was "problems with coverage." The second most-cited reason was the lack of diversity of newspaper staff. This indicates that minority communities can achieve certain results when they take their concerns to the editors (see Chart 6).

**Chart Six : Community Response Has your paper been approached by any racial minority group in the past year to discuss coverage?**

Circulation Category	Yes (%)	No (%)
Over 100,000	77.8	22.2
25,000- 100,000 <sup>1</sup>	25.0	62.5
Under 25,000 <sup>1</sup>	10.0	90.0

<sup>1</sup>12.5% of papers in the 25,000-100,000 circulation category did not answer this question

**Newsroom Response : Has your paper taken any initiatives to improve the hiring and coverage of minorities?**

Circulation Category	Yes (%)	No (%)
Over 100,000	88.9	11.1
25,000- 100,000 <sup>1</sup>	25.0	62.0
Under 25,000	30.0	60.0

<sup>1</sup>The missing percentages are from papers in the category not answering the question.

Eighty percent of the newspapers agree that diversity coverage is a job for everyone, and it shouldn't depend on hiring diverse reporters.

Eight of the nine papers in the largest circulation group, two out of eight in the middle group, and six out of 20 of the smallest papers managed to list at least one initiative to improve coverage, outreach or recruitment of minorities. This represented a decline from the number of papers that responded to a similar question in 1994. Many of the mentions were general, such as "increased awareness resulting in more diverse coverage" or "younger reporters are more in touch with younger readers." Four papers mentioned efforts to increase diversity through internship programs. Three mentioned establishing "diversity beats." Two others have hired minority columnists

to write about issues relevant to their communities, and a similar number have appointed external editorial advisory boards.

There was a significant shift of opinion in 10 years when editors were asked, "Do you feel you and/or your top managers need more background knowledge on race and ethnocultural relations to effectively manage your newsroom?" Only six of 37 papers (16 %) answered yes. Five of them were in the over-100,000 circulation category. In 1994, 19 of the 41 papers (46 %) answered yes to that question.

**Discussion and Conclusions**

It seems clear from the data that, if newspapers care about reflecting their ever-changing communities,

they need to develop a stronger commitment to diversify coverage. One way to do that is to hire a more diverse staff. There seems to be general recognition among editors that journalism schools are turning out minority journalists – 57 percent of them agreed with that statement – but only one editor mentioned a specific initiative designed to capitalize on that, a scholarship for an Aboriginal journalism student. Another mentioned launching an innovative internship program for foreign-trained journalists.

There also seems to be denial that traditionally male, white newsrooms may have a systemic bias against hiring diversity. This seems to be something that Canadian newspapers need to address on an industry-wide basis, perhaps through the Canadian Newspaper Association. There is evidence that the annual ASNE survey of newspaper employment in the United States has improved racial diversity in newsrooms. Perhaps an annual survey by CNA would also improve the low response rate that Ryerson researchers experienced in both the 1994 and 2004 surveys.

Most troubling is the lower commitment editors in all papers seem to have to hiring diversity now, as compared to 10 years before. As newspaper circulation declines, as newspaper staffs fall further out of touch with the demographics of the population, and as news about immigration, religion, anti-terrorism issues, and racial profiling proliferate, one would expect editors to put a higher premium than ever before on making their news gatherers more diverse. But the opposite attitude is reflected in this survey, and we do not know why. This is a rich area for further research.

One clue might be the reasons editors gave for not participating in this survey. Most non-participating papers refused to return subsequent phone calls and emails. Those who did gave various reasons. One editor said filling out the questionnaire is “a no-win situation,” because the paper had very few minority journalists. Another said “I feel uncomfortable even talking about this.” At least two publishers at CanWest newspapers refused to let their editors complete

the questionnaire, one because the paper’s human resources manager said he thought it was illegal to give out such information. When asked to identify the supposed legislation, the publisher of the Ottawa Citizen said the matter was being referred to Gordon Fisher, senior vice-president of CanWest Publications. Fisher cited “significant privacy concerns” as a reason why most CanWest newspapers, including those in Vancouver, Victoria, Edmonton and Ottawa, would not be participating in this research project. He refused to identify any privacy legislation that would prevent the sharing of overall staff numbers broken down by ethnicity. Nor did he say why CanWest editors would not be allowed to answer questions of a non-personal nature like “How strong is your commitment to hire more racial minorities in your newsroom?” Fisher was dismissive when told that the federal Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, which covers most provinces, states that companies can gather and share personal information without consent if “it is used for statistical or scholarly study or research ... (and) the information is used in a manner that will ensure its confidentiality.” He said “it’s a matter of interpretation” and the opinion he received “differs from your advice.” He added that “Given the high sensitivity over privacy matters these days, my own sense is that we are better to err on the side of respecting the concerns expressed to us by good counsel.” It is clear that only an industry-wide initiative is likely to overcome such attitudes.

Further research needs to be done to determine what factors encourage media outlets to be more proactive in recruiting and hiring non-white news-gatherers. There are some data that suggest one such factor might be whether the media outlet falls under the provisions of the federal Employment Equity Act. Although the 2002 filings under the Act include all staff, not just those in the newsrooms, most broadcasters and the Canadian Press wire service show higher levels of non-white employees than any of the newspapers that participated in this study (see Chart 9).

**Chart Seven : Diversity in Other Media**

News agency	Total employees	Visible minorities	Aboriginals	% Non-white
<b>Rogers Communications</b>	1,864	287	20	16.4
<b>CHUM Ltd<sup>1</sup></b>	2,086	187	22	10.0
<b>Canadian Press</b>	317	25	2	8.6
<b>Craig Broadcasting</b>	215	11	7	8.4
<b>CBC</b>	7,049	344	92	6.2

<sup>1</sup>Human Resources Development Canada, Employment Equity filings for 2002

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### **About the Author**

*Prof. John Miller*

Miller is professor of journalism at Ryerson University in Toronto, Canada, and a former news executive with the Toronto Star. His book *Yesterday's News* (Fernwood, 1998) critiqued Canada's daily newspapers and focused on how out of touch they are with their audience. His research has focused on diversity, and he was recognized with the 2003 Award of Excellence from the Canadian Race Relations Foundation. In 1994 he did the first diversity census of Canada's daily newsrooms. He repeated it this year. He has also published three other diversity research projects through the Canadian Newspaper Association and has conducted diversity news training for journalists in CTV television newsrooms.

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