

April 2003

This month our supplement features two topics: media literacy and media bias, plus a brief update on the 2001 Canadian census.

We live in a media saturated society, bombarded 24 hours a day with sounds, images and the spoken word. The media output can be inspirational, informative and entertaining, or biased and of dubious value from either a social or moral point of view.

In a democracy it is important for people to be media literate. They must cultivate an educated awareness of the nature and power of media, and develop the analytical skills to be able to construct real meaning from the information.

Each person has the ability to be a discriminating viewer, listener and reader. But each person also has the responsibility to demand quality programming and fair reporting of events. Viewers and readers are not mere consumers. They can help decide whether an individual program or service survives on television or radio or a newspaper continues to publish.

The material is organized into three segments:

- **Part 1** presents an overview of basic questions to raise in the process of becoming media literate. This is followed by suggested activities, references to good internet sites which treat the subject of media bias, and lessons available at those sites.
- **Part 2** presents several examples of analysis of media bias. The articles pertain to life issues, use of news anchor persons, an insider's charge of media bias, and a defence for "media bias". The teacher could choose other deconstructive articles, taken from local issues or the challenge of the current war in Iraq.
- **Part 3** Topics for further research and discussion

PART 1

Questions for Media Bias Unit

Embarking on a study of media bias one should bear in mind certain questions and why it is important to have a healthy dose of scepticism when reading the newspaper, listening to the radio or watching television. Question number 1 can be a good starting point or opener.

1. "The news is really just 10% reporting of 'facts' and 90% opinion." Discuss this statement.
2. Who owns the newspaper, radio or television station?
3. Who sits on the paper's editorial board?
4. Investigate how the change in ownership can affect a

newspaper's editorial policy and general coverage of the news.

5. As to choice of topics or what makes it onto the "news":
 - a. Who decides what to cover or report?
 - b. Who decides what is "news"? What criteria are used?
 - c. What factors play a role in deciding where a story or report appears in the paper?
 - d. How is a slant given to a news story? By whom?
 - e. What do we need to know about any journalist? How is credibility gained?
 - f. Are "embedded" journalists free to cover the War on Iraq? For an interesting take on this issue see www.slate.msn/id/2080699
6. Is a "columnist" different from a reporter? How? Is there an increasing blurring of the roles?
7. Media enjoy freedom of the press, but to whom is the media responsible? Are there bodies or mechanisms that try to keep the media honest? (for example a press council?)
8. What is the role of the "letters to the editor" page?
9. What language is used by the paper to refer to certain groups? How is bias shown by the choice of words?
10. What is the purpose of a headline? Is there an honest clear connection between the headline and the write-up?
11. In a story who gets quoted and why?
12. What motivates the newspaper (radio, television), desire for profits or the goal of effecting political and social change?
13. Do newspapers have moral values? How do the papers express their moral values? Cite examples from your local papers.
14. The choice of photos can be illuminating. Cite examples of favourable photo coverage versus negative impact of photos. Why are certain photos used? You may wish to use the daily war coverage to illustrate what the press is capable of doing with well-chosen photo spreads.



ACTIVITIES



Activity # 1

Do a one week log of the national dailies or large local daily (- *Globe & Mail*, *Toronto Star*, *National Post*, *Hamilton Spectator*, *Winnipeg Free Press*, *Edmonton Journal*, *Ottawa Citizen*, *Calgary Herald*, *Vancouver Sun*, etc.) and find examples of both types of photos. You may wish to compare or contrast how the various newspapers portray the following public figures in their coverage: Prime Minister Jean Chretien, President George W. Bush, President Saddam Hussein, provincial premiers, provincial opposition leaders, popular singers/entertainers, local members of Parliament or members of the provincial legislature

Activity #2

Do a similar log for three of the newspapers from three different regions of Canada with respect to their coverage of topics such as the following:

- stories on religion in general
- Christianity in particular
- Islam
- the war in Iraq

- military matters
- Hollywood
- the environment
- crime
- poverty
- taxes
- education
- family life.

Compare and contrast their respective treatment of these topics and draw some conclusions from your analysis as to the orientation or general philosophy of those papers.

Activity #3

Carry out a similar study of the editorial cartoons to be found on the editorial pages of three different newspapers using these questions as guides in your analysis:

- Identify the person and issue being portrayed.
- What is the point made by the cartoonist?
- How does the cartoon relate to the rest of the editorial page articles?
- In your opinion is the cartoon effective? Is it fair?
- Write a 15-25 line paragraph supporting or opposing the point of view presented in the cartoon. (The cartoons of *Toronto Star*, page A24 of March 18, and page A17 of the *National Post* of March 18 are interesting examples.

Activity #4

- The current war in Iraq has generated much controversy around the world and here in Canada. Do a study of the way that the Canadian media is covering the war.
- Compare and contrast the editorials in the *Toronto Star* of March 18, The *National Post* of

March 18, and The *Globe & Mail* of March 21

Activity #5

Choose two large daily newspapers and study their front page over a two week period. Analyze their coverage of the news by comparing and contrasting the structure, headlines, articles, topics.

Activity #6

Look at the editorials of The *Toronto Star* and The *National Post* for March

- Summarize in your own words what the editorials say.
- Why do the two newspapers take such opposite views on the subject?

Activity #7

Compare and contrast the coverage of the current Iraqi war by the following news networks

CNN, CBC, FOX, CTV by taking into consideration

- Relative objectivity in reporting the main events
- Amount of coverage given to the war
- Selection of visuals
- On site interviews



PART 2

A.

An excellent lesson for introducing the topic of bias in the news can be found at the Media Awareness Network. Terms are defined and a classroom activity is described. The teacher can adapt the material as per the grade level. For details of the actual lesson outline please go to

<http://www.media-awareness.ca/eng/med/class/teamedia/newsmag.html>

How to Detect Bias in the News (http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/resources/educational/handouts/broadcast_news/bw_bias_in_the_news.cfm) is a teacher handout that can be given as a resource to students. The handout outlines how bias can occur intentionally or by accident. These are some of the way that they can take place. Some are quite subtle and others rather blatant. Each of these approaches is defined and an example is given in the article.

- through selection and omission of material
- through placement on the pages (on the front page or among the want ads)
- by headline
- by photos, captions and camera angles
- through use of names and titles
- word choice and tone
- by source control

(To detect bias, always consider where the news item comes from. Is the information supplied by a reporter, an eyewitness, police or fire officials, executives, or elected or appointed government officials? Each may have a particular bias that is introduced into the story. Companies and public relations directors supply news outlets with puffpieces through news releases, photos or videos. Often news outlets depend on pseudo-events [demonstrations, sit-ins, ribbon cuttings, speeches and ceremonies] that take place mainly to gain news cover age.)

- through statistics and crowd counts

(Check the article by Don Sellar, The Toronto Star's ombudsman on page E6 of March 15 edition in which he analyses this particular problem with specific reference to recent stories. Examples he gave is the exaggeration of population counts in the Middle East relative to Israel and its Arab neighbours and also the conflicting crowd estimates for recent anti-war marches.)

B

www.media-awareness.ca/english/teachers/educative_resources/recommended_sites.cfm

This is a good curriculum page on teaching media in Ontario, lots of good ideas and lessons. It also provides links to recommended web sites dealing with media edu-

cation in Canada.

Some of the lesson titles include the following)

Teaching Lessons and Units

Bias Examines the role subjectivity and perception play in media production, particularly in the making of television newscasts. (Grades 9 – 12)

How to Analyse News A framework for teaching students the process by which the news is constructed. (Grades 7 – 12)

Magazine Production: Ageing in the 80's and 90's
This unit hones communication skills such as library research, reading, writing and visual expression, in the production of a student magazine. (Grades 11 - 12)

Magazine Production: The Adolescent Advantage As above. (Grades 11 - 12)

Magazine Production: Fill the Gap As above. (Grades 11 - 12)

News is Not Just Black and White A five-lesson unit designed to help students critically analyse what they read in the newspaper, particularly representations of aboriginal and visible minorities. (Grades 10 - 12)

News/Journalism Across the Media Examines how news is packaged differently by the print and non-print media. (Grades 7 - 10)

Too White: Minority Representation in Newspapers
Makes students aware of the issues surrounding representation of non-white people, in the newsroom, and in our daily newspapers. (Grades 11 and 12)

Writing a Newspaper Article Students examine the concept of freedom of speech and learn the elements of good news writing. (Grades 6 - 9)

You Be the Editor/You Were the Editor A selection of actual case studies is presented to illustrate the hard ethical choices news editors make each day. (Grades 8 - 12)

1. Lesson on the topic of BIAS

This unit was created by Roger Bird as part of a Media Education course.

www.media-awareness.ca/english/resources/educational/lessons/secondary/broadcast

Level: Grade 10 - 12

Overview

This lesson introduces students to the concept of bias or slant, in newspapers and in television newscasts. Students begin by comparing three newspaper articles about the same news event, each reported from a different perspective. They then explore the role of the gatekeeper, or editor,

in determining the slant of a story, and analyze the titles of newspaper stories for slant or bias. Once students have looked at newspapers, they will use viewing logs to analyse television newscasts from two different television stations. These newscasts will be analysed based on **language usage, story selection and story order.**

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Recognize how a single event could generate more than one news story.
- Identify a point of view or bias, based on the language used
- Experience and understand the role of subjectivity and perception in the media
- Understand the role of the gatekeeper
- Critically analyse or deconstruct two newscasts for potential bias through comparison, focusing on language, story selection and story order

Preparation and Materials

The teacher can choose any number of topics and articles appropriate to the grade level or having current relevance and interest)

A suggested activity (following copyright guidelines) might be to tape news broadcasts for *The National* on CBC at 10 p.m. and the CTV *National News* on CTV at 11 p.m. An alternative might be to tape a couple of American news networks and compare them to one another or contrast them to the coverage of the same event or issue on the Canadian networks.(Or, check out Cable in the Classroom for copyright-cleared news programming.)

2. Another interesting lesson deals with creating a classroom newspaper

The following unit was created by Stephanie M. Rusnak, B.S.Ed, of Charleston, South Carolina, as part of her Media Production Course. You can visit her extensive Web site, where you'll find lots of information for teaching a nine-week, middle school, media production course.

Level Grades 6 - 9

Overview

The lesson begins with a discussion about freedom of speech and the important role it plays in journalism. Next, students will learn how to create news articles by developing 'lead paragraphs' and by using the 'inverted pyramid' model. Once this is done, they will be given time during class to select topics, conduct research, write their articles and proof read and peer edit their own and other's works.

Outcomes

Students will: understand journalistic terms and vocabu-

lary, understand the structure of news articles, produce and publish written work, using appropriate technology, analyse and assess the information and ideas gathered from a variety of print and electronic sources, develop keyboarding skills, develop peer editing and proof reading skills

Materials and Preparation

Photocopy the following student handouts:

Creating a Newspaper Article

Formula for a Well-Written News Article

Procedure

This unit should take approximately one-and-a-half weeks.

Freedom of speech (1 day)

Introduction to school journalism/brainstorming (1 day)

Research articles (2 days)

Write/revise (3 days)

For outline of the Daily Lesson Plans go to

www.media-awareness.ca/eng/med/class/teamedia/newsmag.htm

Other useful sites are listed here

www.gargaro.com/abortion/60minutes.html

www.mediaresearch.org/notablequotables/2003/nq20030303.aspl

www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/4011/Activism/MediaBiasHomepage.html

www.mediaresearch.org/Special/Reports/2003/Peter

www.newsmax.com/hottopics/Media_Bias_shtml

www.fightthebias.com/

www.webenglishteacher.com/media

www.mediaed.org/studyguides/StrategiesForIntergratingMediaLibrary

slate.msn.com/id/2078200/

This site provides an overview of the topic and its genesis in the American context.

Go to the Google engine and type media bias and you will get many useful hits of reliable sites.

PART 3

In the next few pages are examples of media bias as applied to the field of life issues.

Biospin

Adult-Stem-Cell Breakthrough! the headlines should have screamed. Stunning Discovery Could Mean No Need to Use Embryos in Research. Unfortunately, with the notable exception of a front-page story in the Boston Globe, the mainstream media has significantly downplayed this potentially exciting scientific discovery.

Here's the scoop: As originally reported late last

year in the medical journal *Blood*, Dr. Catherine M. Verfaillie and other researchers at the Stem Cell Institute, University of Minnesota, have discovered a way to coax an adult cell found in the bone marrow to exhibit many of the attributes that supposedly make embryonic stem cells irreplaceable to the development of future miracle medical therapies. While there is still much research to be done, multi-potent adult progenitor cells (MAPCs) appear to be versatile, that is, capable of transforming into different types of tissues. (In a culture dish, the cells can be coaxed into becoming muscle, cartilage, bone, liver, or different types of neurons in the brain.) They are also malleable, meaning they can do so relatively easily. They also exhibit the immortality valued in embryonic cells, that is to say, they seem capable of being transformed into cell lines that can be maintained indefinitely. At the same time, these adult cells do not appear to present the acute danger associated with embryonic stem cells: the tendency to grow uncontrollably causing tumors or even cancers.

This should be a big story considering the intense controversy over embryonic-stem-cell research (ESCR) and the coming attempt in the United States Senate to outlaw human cloning (S.790). (In Canada Bill C-13 is about to be voted on as this issue of the supplement was being prepared) Indeed, *The New York Times* and *Washington Post* consider embryonic-stem-cell research so important — including the manufacture and use of human-clone embryos in such experiments — that both have repeatedly editorialized in favor of turning the throttle full-speed ahead on this immoral endeavor. Yet, when the potentially crucial discovery of an adult cell that could make embryonic destruction and therapeutic cloning unnecessary comes to light — and just at the time when the United States Senate is about to argue whether to outlaw the cloning of human embryos — other than the splendid *Boston Globe* article, the story has been significantly underplayed.

This isn't the first time that major breakthroughs in adult-stem-cell research have received under-whelming coverage. Indeed, a discernable pattern has developed in the mainstream press regarding these issues. Scientific breakthroughs involving embryonic cells generally receive the full-brass-band treatment, with front-page coverage that often leaps to the all-important television news. Meanwhile, you can usually hear the crickets chirping when scientists announce a breakthrough in adult-stem-cell research, or, as in the *Post* story, the reportage places more emphasis on why the breakthrough should not deter destructive embryonic research than on the actual adult-cell

experiments.

There are many examples of this phenomenon. Here are just a few:

On July 19, 2001, the *Harvard University Gazette* reported that mice with Type 1 diabetes (an autoimmune disorder) were completely cured of their disease using adult stem cells. This was accomplished by destroying the cells responsible for the diabetes, at which point, the animals' own adult stem cells regenerated the missing cells with healthy tissue.

On June 15, 2001, the *Globe and Mail (Canada)* reported a wonderful story that could provide great hope to people with spinal injuries. Israeli doctors injected paraplegic Melissa Holley, age 18, who became disabled when her spinal cord was severed in an auto accident. After researchers injected her with her own white blood cells, she regained the ability to move her toes and control her bladder. This is the exact kind of therapy that embryonic-stem-cell boosters only hope they can begin to achieve in ten years.

In December 2001, *Tissue Engineering*, a peer-reviewed journal, reported that researchers believe they will be able to use stem cells found in fat to rebuild bone. The researchers are about to enter extensive animal studies. If these pan out, people with osteoporosis and other degenerative bone conditions could benefit significantly. Yet, other than appearing on an online health newswire, I have seen nothing about it from the mainstream press.

All of this begs an intriguing question: Why is there so much less interest in adult/alternative-stem-cell-research successes stories among the media than they exhibit toward embryonic advances? After all, if the science, were all that mattered, the visibility and coverage of stories like those related above would at least equal the attention given to ESCR stories. And therein lies the rub. I don't think that science is the primary issue driving the extent and depth of news coverage. Media culture is.

It is no secret that most members of the media are politically liberal and adherents to a rational materialist worldview. They are also (generally) emotionally pro-choice on abortion. Because the cloning/ESCR issues force us to dwell on whether unborn human life has intrinsic value simply because it is human, the issue tends to be viewed by journalists through a distorting abortion prism.

I think another part of the explanation for the shallow coverage of adult-stem-cell research is the media's obsession with credentials. When scien-

tists say that embryonic stem cells offer far greater hope for future medical therapies than do adult cells, journalists take one look at their curricula vitae and believe them wholeheartedly. Never mind that these biotech spokespersons may be as ideologically driven to their opinions in favor of research as the usual suspects in the pro-life movement are to theirs opposing it. And never mind that the incomes of some of these scientists may depend on continued funding for ESCR and/or cloning. And never mind that events have disproved their repeated assertions that future cell therapies cannot be derived in any way other than through embryonic sources.....The multiple university degrees and rational materialistic credentials make what the biotech researchers say more true than whatever cloning/ESCR opponents may argue — regardless of the actual evidence.

Finally, clout in public-policy disputes usually boils down to money. Quite often, reporters don't find stories; stories find reporters. That is how PR firms make the big bucks; being paid quite handsomely to alert journalists to stories their clients' want covered. In this fight, Big Biotech's very deep pockets almost guarantee coverage that is skewed in favor of destroying embryos in experiments and permitting the creation of human-research clones. Or to paraphrase an old saying, he or she who has the gold gets to spin the story.

Wesley J. Smith. BioSpin – Why Adult Stem Cell Research Successes Get Downplayed by the Media. *National Review Magazine* (January 28, 2001).

http://www.catholiceducation.org/articles/medical_ethics/me0037.html

Questions

1. What are the main reasons why the media according to Wesley Smith downplay the successes attained in adult cell research?

Conduct your own research on this topic. By citing examples support or refute his conclusions.

anchors Away

Bias in broadcast news anchors is inevitable when the profitability of entertainment is placed ahead of the integrity of information.

Network television news anchors are biased against conservatives and we can all lose sleep at night, safe in the knowledge that this truth is universal.

Yet, inaccurate or irresponsible reporting is not so much the product of bias as it is the inevitable consequence of greed.

In the age of Ed Murrow, Walter Cronkite, and David Brinkley, the network news anchor (a term coined for Cronkite during convention coverage in the 50's) was likely an old-school print reporter with years of experience and understanding of news coverage. Most were equally able editors as they were reporters, and since the news was still about issues, they had to be as well.

But when accident reporting et al. became a substitute for real news, the responsibility of the news anchor changed as well. Since a majority of stories today are driven by visual images, there isn't always a lot of actual reporting to be done.

Although they bristle at the suggestion, modern news anchors are more news readers than ever before. Few anchors produce their own segments on a regular basis, and many young broadcast journalists have no experience in print journalism at all. To many modern day broadcasters, news is not news without their face or voice to accompany it; presentation is as important as content, if not more so.

A policy of style over substance inevitably led to a redefinition of the marketability of the network news anchor. It seems to no longer matter what is being reported — only who is doing the reporting.

Network news executives, under tremendous pressure to deliver ever-higher profits at less and less cost to the network, are inevitably forced to concede to the marketing department. Thus, we have the birth of network news cross promotion, and the degradation of news into entertainment.

Bias in broadcast news anchors is inevitable when the profitability of entertainment is placed ahead of the integrity of information. In the search for more profits, the networks have decided that most news makes lousy entertainment.

Unfortunately for the millions of American people who still rely on the networks for information, most entertainment makes lousy news. Network news anchors have become interpreters of information because their employers have not only allowed them to do so, but have encouraged them to. Network executives believe the public tunes in to see the anchor, rather than to hear the news.

In the world of network television, ignorance truly is bliss.

Sterling Rome. Anchors Away. CNSNews.com
(April 2, 2001)

<http://www.mediaresearch.org/notablequotables/2003/nq20030303.asp>

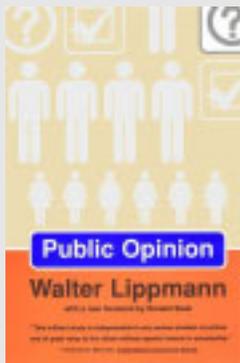
<http://catholiceducation.org/articles/media/me0022.html>



Questions

1. Why do networks have anchor persons?
2. Watch three different networks reporting the same news item. Do they take the same approach or do they differ in important ways?
3. a) How has the role of the anchor changed over the years?
b) What is responsible for the change according to Sterling Rome?
4. What leads Sterling Rome to conclude that network executives believe that the public tunes in to see the anchor, rather than to hear the news?

How the Media Twists the News

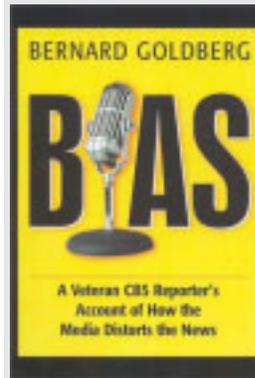


Everyone knows how much power the press has in shaping the news, how its choice of stories and words influence readers. But one afternoon, talking about a rather silly feature story we were doing on pop culture, someone joked, You know, we can start a trend just by calling it a trend!

*Walter Lippman, journalist propagandist, political scientist, author, and adviser to the presidents, wrote in his book **Public Opinion***

Every newspaper when it reaches the reader is the result of a whole series of selections..... [the reader] must find a familiar foothold in the story, and this is supplied to him by the use of stereotypes. They tell him that if an association of plumbers is called a combine it is appropriate to develop his hostility; if it is called a group of leading businessmen the cue is for a favorable reaction. It is in a combination of these elements that the power to create opinion resides.

Last year, veteran CBS newsman Bernard



*Goldberg shocked the media world with his book, **Bias: A CBS Insider Exposes How the Media Distort the News**. He minced no words in laying out the fundamental problem. The old argument that the networks and other 'media elites' have a liberal bias is so blatantly true that it's hardly worth discussing anymore, he writes. No, we*

don't sit around in dark corners and plan strategies on how we're going to slant the news. We don't have to. It comes naturally to most reporters.... When you get right down to it, liberals in the newsroom see liberal views as just plain...sensible, reasonable, rational views, which just happen to coincide with their own (emphasis added).

The problem comes in the big social and cultural issues, where we often sound more like flacks for liberal causes than objective journalists, Goldberg admits. It's a world where money is often seen as a solution to social problems, where antiabortionists are seen as kooks and weirdos. The major network chiefs take their cues every day from the New York Times, he says, and all reporting derives from that worldview. It's scary to think that so many important people who bring Americans the news can be so delusional. Scary because, as Goldberg notes, It's not just that so many journalists are so different from mainstream America. It's that some are downright hostile to what many Americans hold sacred. And these are the creators of American public opinion.

If you control language, you control thought. In Abuse of Language, Abuse of Power, author Joseph Pieper reminds us of Plato's lifelong battle with the Sophists, those highly paid and popularly applauded experts in the art of twisting words, who were able to sweet-talk something bad into something good and to turn white into black. Hegel saw sophistry as a distinct danger to any society, believing that such absolute and unmoored questioning that plucks apart any object and dialectically discredits everything...almost inevitably leads us to the conviction that everything can be justified if we look hard enough for reasons.

Even when challenged, the news elites keep changing the language and their tactics for controlling it. In George Orwell's 1984, the Party replaces ordinary language with Newspeak, a language of propaganda, euphemism, double-talk, and evasion — a language in which words are evacuated of their natural meaning.

We don't need to search for modern examples. The advocates of abortion-on-demand do this better and more forcibly than anyone. They eschew phrases like partial-birth abortion, which accurately describes a surgical procedure. Instead, they use words with a more positive connotation, combining reproductive with rights, and pro with choice. They label those who oppose the killing of life in the womb as antichoice, preferring not to mention what the choice is.

On a massive scale, people have been reeducated to accept the unacceptable. Even people of faith, drawn into this groupthink culture, accept distortion of the truth, packaged as freedom and enlightenment. As Pieper put it, The general public is being reduced to a state where people not only are unable to find out about the truth but also become unable even to search for the truth because they are satisfied with deception and trickery that have determined their convictions, satisfied with a fictitious reality created by design through the abuse of language.

In a world of media spin, it's not easy to keep one's own balance. First, know what your core values are, what you hold to be objectively true. Be discriminating in your selection of news sources and carefully scrutinize everything you hear and read — see how it resonates with what you believe.

Note how news gatherers select subjects and how they cover them. What photographs do they choose? Do their accounts sound slanted, or do they present compelling voices from both sides of an issue? Notice their sources: Do you hear from the same set of experts again and again?

It's interesting how much of Lippman's analysis from 70 years ago still applies to the media.

The power of public opinion, which is supposed to be the driving force behind most important decisions in a democracy, can itself be driven or steered by the prejudices of unofficial opinion-makers. Vigilance and self-awareness are its only protection. Which is why, wherever they get their news, intelligent citizens will take nothing for granted except their principles.

Sheila Gribben Liaugminas. How the Media Twist the News. *Crisis* 20, no. 9 (October 2002): 14-18.

<http://catholiceducation.org/articles/media/me0032.html>

Questions

1. According to Lippman where does the power to create opinion reside?
2. What did Goldberg mean when he says that the media distort the news? What arguments does he offer?

3. Why is there danger to any society when language is abused? What contemporary example is provided by Sheila Liaugminas?
4. All reporting derives from the world view of The *New York Times* according to Goldberg. What does she mean by this? Is that a problem? Why or why not?
5. What caution/advice does she recommend to readers?
6. Can You identify the prejudices of unofficial opinion-makers in our society?
7. Do people pay too much attention to celebrities' opinions on serious issues, for example television and movie stars speaking about the war in Iraq?
8. Can you think of other examples? What about Ron McLean and Don Cherry on the March 22 broadcast of Hockey Night in Canada during Coach's Corner? Do you agree or disagree with these two individuals using a hockey broadcast to air their views on the Iraqi war?

More general questions

1. Does the press have too much power?
2. Does it abuse this power?
3. How can their power be checked?
4. What danger is there in a narrow concentration of ownership in the media (radio, television, newspapers)?
5. In which medium is there a greater degree of competition?(newspapers, radio, or television) Why do you think this is so?
6. Should the press be a tool for the advocacy of causes or report news objectively?
7. Do you think that journalism is a profession? What should be its guiding principle?
8. Why have journalists volunteered to be on the frontlines during this current war in which several have been killed?

The following article is a Canadian example of the claim of media bias.

Poll reveals what we already know about media bias

It has long been obvious that the media has a bias in favour of abortion, or at least against those who speak up against it. When journalists for The Interim and several Christian papers were harassed by the police outside a Toronto abortuary, it was practically impossible to get the so-called mainstream media to take notice despite their constant advocacy for freedom of the press. Sometimes the bias occurs in subtle ways, such as when the Ottawa Citizen reported that just 600 people took part in the March for Life on May 10 when there were at least four times that number. Or the number of news outlets that left the impression the March was a

demonstration against embryonic stem cell research, ignoring the fact that the federal government's announcement roughly coincided with the 33rd anniversary of the passing of Trudeau's Omnibus Bill that legalized abortion, which was the real reason pro-lifers took to the streets of Ottawa.

The Interim began publication in March 1983 because even then, the media did not give the pro-life cause a fair shake: they did not tell the truth about abortion, they ignored the reality of more than 100,000 babies killed in the womb each year, they treated pro-life activists with disrespect. Now, two decades later, the situation is worse. Instead of treating the pro-life issue with contempt, the media just often ignore it (unless they think they can tarnish pro-lifers, such as when the national media attacked Canadian Alliance leader Stockwell Day over abortion).

Media bias would be less of a problem if the mainstream press admitted that it existed. The Interim has a definite view but we don't hide it. We exist to make the case for the protection of life and family.

Mainstream media look down at niche papers - The Interim, the religious press, single-cause publications - because, the mainstreamers claim, we don't look at both sides. It's laughable that they think we are biased while they are not. We strive to be fair in covering the other side, but we clearly have a side we are rooting for - the side for life. And if you think about it, having a bias in favour of life is not that bad of a bias to have. In fact, in my less-than-humble opinion, it is better than no bias at all.

Paul Tuns *The Interim*, June 2002
www.lifesite.net/interim

<http://www.gargaro.com/abortion/60minutes.html>

- and study the letter to the program *60 Minutes* by Jenn Roth.
- What does Jenn Roth object to in her letter to *60 Minutes*?
 - Check with local major dailies and compare how these papers reported the recent trial and conviction of James Kopp who killed an abortionist doctor a few years back.



CANADIAN CENSUS NOTES LABOUR FORCE WILL SUFFER DUE TO UNDER-POPULATION

A Statistics Canada report based on 2001 Census data released today indicates that the workforce has become much 'greyer.' The average age of the labour force rose from 37.1 years in 1991 to 39.0 years in 2001.

By the end of the decade, 15% of the labour force was within 10 years of retirement age. By 2011, when almost one-fifth of the baby boom generation will be at least 61 years of age, there will be a potential for shortages in certain occupations. In addition, rates of fertility have remained at low levels for the last three decades. As a result, fewer young people are entering the working-age population to replace individuals in the age group nearing retirement. In 2001, there were 2.7 labour force participants aged 20 to 34 for every one aged 55 and over, down from 3.7 in 1981.

Retiring baby boomers will have a significant impact on the size of the labour market, especially as relatively small cohorts of young people will be entering it. Boomers - people aged 37 to 55 in 2001 - made up 47% of the labour force.

Questions

- What evidence does Tuns cite for his claim that the media is biased against the pro-life cause?
- Why does he argue in favour of a certain kind of bias?
- As a follow-up, log articles dealing with family and life issues as these appear in one of the large daily newspapers over a two week period. Compare and contrast those stories with the daily news stories found at LifeSite News service.com
 - Is there any commonality between the stories/
 - Why do the news stories on LifeSite seldom make it into the major daily newspapers?
 - Research Bill C-13 and study how it is covered differently in the large daily paper and on LifeSite? What accounts for the difference?
- For an American example go to

Ten years from now, one-half of them will be 55 or over, and 18% will be over the age of 60.

Census data show that immigrants who landed in Canada during the 1990s, and who were in the labour force in 2001, represented almost 70% of the total growth of the labour force over the decade. If current immigration rates continue, it is possible that immigration could account for virtually all labour force growth by 2011.

<http://www.cbc.ca/cgi-bin/templates/print.cgi?/2002/09/26/babies020926>
<http://cspace.unb.ca/nbco/globaled/twoapproach/activ20.html>

Questions

1. Why do newspapers pay so little attention to this fact regarding the low fertility rate in Canada?
2. What economic problems are likely to follow if these trends continue?

3. In Quebec’s current election campaign each of the three major parties have been making promises to help families. What has the governing PQ party in Quebec offered as potential solutions? Should Canada be adopting these measures as a national strategy?

4. In terms of land area Canada ranks #2 in the world, but in terms of population Canada is vastly under-populated. Given the findings of the most recent census (2001) should Canada

- a) open wide the doors to immigration?
- b) pass laws to prohibit abortion, since 150 000 unborn Canadians are killed each year?
- c) provide tax incentives to families to increase the national birth rate (1.49) which is not even adequate to meet Canada’s replacement need?

5. What steps can Canada take to reverse the demographic crisis which threatens its well being, future sovereignty and perhaps its very viability as a nation?



In the last few years, Canada has faced a critical shortage of skilled workers.

Canada's unemployment rate has hit its lowest levels in recent history, dropping from 9.6 percent to seven percent. In the latter half of 2000, the Canadian labor market witnessed the creation of 187,000 new job openings.

Labor shortages have broadened beyond high-tech companies to include construction trades, truck transportation, engineering, food services, and accommodation

www.goinglobal.com/countries/canada/canada_employment.asp