

**HOW CANWEST NEWSPAPERS COVERED THE BCTF
IN OCTOBER 2005**

by

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ABSTRACT

This study examined CanWest newspaper coverage of a province-wide strike by the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) in October 2005, to test whether CanWest's editorial policy on the BCTF was consistent across different article types and markets. The researcher coded 743 articles from 28 CanWest newspapers for tone (negative, neutral or balanced, or positive) with respect to the BCTF, and used bar graphs and Pearson's r to compare the overall tone of article types (editorials, comments, and news) and markets (national, BC regional, and BC local). Results show similarities in tone across editorials and comments, but not news coverage, and similarities across national and local markets, but not local markets. Chi-square tests confirm these results are not due to chance, and an intercoder reliability test shows strong support for the researcher's codings. The study demonstrates simple techniques for researchers to illustrate and analyze their responses to large quantities of articles.

Keywords: CanWest; BCTF; media bias; public schools; teachers strike

DEDICATION

William Russell Bullard, 1918-1996

Per ardua ad astra

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1 INTRODUCTION

This document is the report of a qualitative study of newspaper articles that were published in October 2005 by CanWest Global Communications Corporation (CanWest), about the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF), during a month when an illegal strike by the BCTF shut down the British Columbia (BC) public school system for two weeks. The study tested a conjecture that the editorial policy of newspaper owners and their senior editors dominates and shapes the commentary and news coverage of columnists and reporters regarding policy matters.¹ Specifically, the project tested whether CanWest's editorial policy regarding the BCTF was consistent across all types of articles (editorials, comments, news) in all markets (national, BC regional, BC local).

Chapter 1 presents the general background of the study, specifies the problem of the study, describes its significance, and presents an overview of the methods used. The chapter concludes by noting delimitations and defining some special terms used.

1.1 General Background of the Study

CanWest, owner of Canada's largest chain of newspapers, has a reputation for promoting socially and politically conservative views² and for attempting to centralize control of local editorial policy (Edge, 2007; Orłowski, 2006). The BCTF is the exclusive bargaining agent for teachers in the BC public school system. This study is about CanWest's newspaper coverage of the BCTF at a moment when the BCTF's actions were

¹ The concept of policy in newspapers will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

² "Reporting from a decidedly partisan perspective, [CanWest's flagship newspaper, the *National Post*] eschewed traditional journalistic notions of neutrality for thinly-veiled advocacy of conservative causes" (Edge, 2007, p. 3).

in a head-on collision with the editorial views of CanWest's owners and senior executives.

Throughout the school year 2005-2006, the BCTF was engaged in a public struggle with the Liberal government of BC for a new collective agreement for approximately 40,000 public school teachers. In October 2005, this struggle escalated to a province-wide strike—quickly ruled illegal by a BC Supreme Court judge—which lasted two full weeks, until both the BCTF and the Liberal government accepted a facilitator's recommendations, and resumed negotiations—multilateral as well as bilateral—which culminated in increased funding for students with special needs, amendments to the School Act regarding class size and class composition, and a new collective agreement for teachers.

This study focuses on CanWest newspaper coverage of the BCTF at a time, October 2005, when the actions of the BCTF qualified as an important policy matter for the owners and senior executives of CanWest newspapers, as the BCTF was a public sector union disrupting public services with an illegal strike.³ However, in reviewing CanWest's newspaper coverage of the strike, Gutstein (2005, October 31) found that some CanWest columnists offered "balanced and fair observations", while some news reporters gave "a sympathetic account of the teachers' issues" (p. 159), despite what Gutstein saw as CanWest's resolute support for the BC Liberal government and for independent schools, and its "hostility" to public education. In fact, the volume of positive news stories about the teachers' dispute led Gutstein to question the commonly

³ Maniago et al. (2005) and Gunster (2008) have detailed the pro-government, anti-BCTF partisanship of Global News, CanWest's television outlet in BC, during the October 2005 teachers' strike.

held assumption that owners and editors dominate reporters and columnists in shaping the news.⁴ For the current study, this assumption was formulated as a verifiable conjecture, hereafter called the *editorial policy conjecture*, that the editorial policy of CanWest newspapers on the BCTF was consistent across all types of articles (editorials, comments, news) and all markets (national, BC regional, BC local).

The methods employed to test this conjecture will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3. Here briefly, the study coded each article for tone (negative, neutral-or-balanced, or positive) with respect to the BCTF, compiled the results for each article type and for each market, and used graphical methods and statistical tests to analyze differences between article types and between markets. In this process, other features of the articles (markets, dates, etc.) were noted, to test whether CanWest's editorial policy was consistent across different markets, and over time.

In summary, the study had two related objectives, to test the editorial policy conjecture, and to find methods with which to test this conjecture.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Given the above considerations, the research problem can be stated as a question: How consistent was CanWest's editorial policy with respect to the BCTF, as expressed in its editorial articles, across different types of articles in different markets over the course of October 2005? Specifically,

1. What were the differences between editorials, comments, and news?

⁴ "In the political economy of communication, the influence of owners and editors in shaping the news is considered to trump the influence of individual newswriters. In light of the many positive stories during the teachers' dispute, that assessment may need to be reconsidered" (Gutstein, 2005, October 31, p. 160).

2. What were the differences between columns, opinion pieces, and letters?
3. What were the differences between national, regional, and local markets?
4. What were the differences between regional newspapers?
5. What were the differences that appeared over time?

Each question examines the differences between categories in the proportions of articles that are negative, neutral-or-balanced, or positive about the BCTF. Each question tests the editorial policy conjecture, namely, that newspaper owners and editors dominate columnists and reporters in shaping the news. In each case, the conjecture suggests there will be no salient differences in editorial policy with respect to the BCTF. Where the results do indicate salient differences, the project will discuss these differences in the light of the current literature.

1.3 Significance of the Problem

This study contributes to discussions about the relationship of newspaper policy and news coverage, while testing a widely accepted conjecture under optimum conditions: In October 2005, the largest newspaper chain in Canada, with a reputation for promoting strongly conservative views, covering a public sector trade union engaged in an illegal strike, published hundreds of articles in national, regional, and local markets.

This study required the researcher to develop new methods, which can be adapted by other researchers for coding newspaper articles, and presenting the results.

1.4 Overview of the Methods Used

This is a qualitative study for which one person (the researcher) read and evaluated a large number of newspaper articles for their tone (negative, neutral-or-balanced, or positive) with respect to the BCTF. From online Proquest sources, the

researcher assembled a corpus of articles that had been published in CanWest newspapers in October 2005, and entered the articles into an electronic database, with information that would allow comparison between categories of articles. He then used a two-question rubric to code the tone of each article with respect to the BCTF, and tabulated the results in an electronic spreadsheet. From the spreadsheet, he created a three-bar graph (profile) for each category of articles, examined the profiles side-by-side, noted similarities and differences, and attempted to account for differences between categories of articles, with reference to the literature. He used Pearson's r correlation to verify visual observation of differences between categories of articles, and chi-square tests to estimate the probability that these differences were the result of chance.

1.5 Delimitations of the Study

This is a qualitative study for which the researcher quantified his own readings of newspaper articles about an organization of which he was an active member during the study period. This suggests limitations on the validity and reliability of the study.

As for validity, the particular question posed of each article—"What is the tone of the article with respect to the BCTF?"—produced information only about CanWest's policy on the BCTF in October 2005, not on CanWest's policy on the Liberal government of BC. Other questions would have yielded very different results—"What is the tone of the article with respect to the Liberal government?" or "Which side of the teachers' dispute does the article favour, the BCTF or the Liberal government?"

As for reliability, a different reader, using the same two-question rubric, could have arrived at different results. The researcher cannot escape his own experiences, preferences, and habits of reading. In particular, he has been a trade union activist for

more than forty years, and believes that trade unions make a positive contribution to liberal democratic society. During the study period, he was an officer of the New Westminster Teachers' Union, and was responsible for visiting picket lines and boosting morale among striking teachers. He also intervened in the BCTF's internal debate to evaluate the strategy, tactics, and outcome of the strike (Bullard, 2005).

To establish the reliability of the article coding, an intercoder reliability test (described in Chapter 3) was carried out, with results (described in Chapter 4) that support the accuracy of the researcher's codings.

1.6 Definitions of Key Terms

Although key terms used in this study will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2, it may be helpful to list them here, with their basic definitions as used in this study.

- *editorial policy*: the preferences of newspaper owners and editors on selected issues and events (social, political, economic, religious, cultural, environmental, etc.), as expressed in all articles on the issue or event.
- *bias*: (1) the preferences (personal policy) of a writer with respect to the subject matter of his or her writing; (2) the use of covert means to express the writer's preferences, including especially the omission of facts and opinions that would tend to contradict the writer's preferences. No judgment is made or implied in this study that such omissions are intentional or unintentional.
- *tone*: the coding of a newspaper article—negative (Neg), neutral-or-balanced (N/B), or positive (Pos)—based on indications of the intentions of an actor, and the impacts of the actor's actions on others.
- *profile*: a bar graph of the shares of *tone* (Neg, N/B, Pos) in a group of articles.

As will be shown in Chapter 2, *bias* is used ambiguously in the literature, and needs to be distinguished from *policy*. As well, *tone* and *profile* are used in the study in special ways.

1.7 Organization of the Thesis Report

While Chapter 1 has given a brief overview of the study, the rest of this report presents the study in detail. Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature on newspaper policy and the related concept of newspaper bias, as well as previous attempts to measure bias; Chapter 3 describes the methods used by the researcher in this study; Chapter 4 describes the results of the researcher's coding of newspaper articles, and the results of an intercoder reliability test; Chapter 5 discusses the findings and their limitations, and offers suggestions for further research.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

To help readers understand the results of this study, this chapter reviews theoretical literature underlying the research question, and empirical literature underlying the methods used to answer the research question. The chapter begins by describing the search process used by the researcher.

2.1 Search Process

The literature used for this study was found by following threads from one journal article or book to the next, starting with a search on "media bias" in Google Scholar[®], which yielded more than four thousand items⁵, ordered by the number of times they have been cited by other authors. The researcher began by reading articles from among the first thirty items retrieved, and then used the reference lists of these articles to find further articles and books. The researcher's initial aim was to understand the concept of bias, which led immediately to the concept of policy. As it happened, distinguishing between bias and policy was crucial for this study. The literature on bias often referred to journalistic norms of practice, which have been developed by journalists to avoid bias, or the imputation of bias. As this study would depend on content analysis, these norms were explored for characteristics of newspaper writing that could be validly associated with newspaper policy and reliably identified in coding. The literature was also read for models that could be used to answer the research question.

⁵ This abundance ought to be kept in perspective. Google Scholar[®] also returns more than eleven hundred items for "dust bunnies".

2.2 Theoretical Literature

This section explains and disentangles the closely related concepts of policy and bias in newspaper writing, before reviewing journalistic norms intended to avoid bias, in search of criteria to assess CanWest newspaper articles for policy on the BCTF.

2.2.1 Newspaper Policy

This section describes how owners and editors control the content of newspapers through policy, and how newspapers express policy on labour matters through narrative framing. The section concludes by connecting a definition of policy to the editorial policy conjecture, and to the research question of this study.

The owners and editors⁶ of newspapers are able to exert effective control over what they publish, through informal social control in the newsroom, whereby the journalists⁷ they employ are able to develop intuitive, accurate understandings of their employers' policy on selected issues and events, without being told directly (Breed, 1955). Editors' control is informal, in that they avoid giving reporters explicit direction on how to write news stories, as this would be contrary to the norms of professional

⁶ A large newspaper may have a hierarchy of editors to oversee all stages of news production, including story selection and assignment, proof-reading, copy-editing, style-editing, and fact-checking. However, for this study, the term "editors" refers only to those editors concerned with policy as reflected in the selection and content of news stories, not to editors concerned primarily with the technical aspects of production. For the small, local papers owned by CanWest, these two concerns (policy and technical production) may be embodied in one person; nevertheless, this study focuses on the editor, not as a technician, but as a policy representative of the newspaper owner, CanWest.

⁷ In the literature on newspapers, the term "journalists" refers to persons in many different roles; for this study, "journalists" includes only reporters and columnists, whose assignments, and prospects for advancement, depend on the "editors" described above. Breed (1955) makes the same distinction between "staffers" and "executives" (p. 327).

journalism, and could undermine staff morale. Respected news executives⁸, with years of their own experience as journalists, and with "virtually unlimited power [to] suggest, select, and veto stories whenever they choose", will exercise their power sparingly to avoid the resentment of editors (Gans, 1979, p. 94). Nevertheless, the policy of any newspaper originates with its owners and editors, not with the columnists and reporters who work for them (Desbarats, 1996). Columnists and reporters, whatever their personal views, ultimately work under editors who can exercise "tremendous influence" over promotions, assignments, and final product; "These editors...are in turn hired and promoted by the owners of media enterprises, whose views they presumably respect and reflect" (Desbarats, 1996, p. 171). The socialization of journalists to accept unwritten editorial policies can habituate them to monitor and censor themselves, entirely without the intervention of their employers (Edge, 2007). For owners and editors, policy considerations extend beyond the understandable desire to please or placate advertisers or readers. In Canada's commercial, competitive, liberal democratic society, there is "an unavoidable connection between journalism and relations of social and political power" (Hackett & Zhao, 1998, p. 7), such that owners and editors promote worldviews congenial to their long-term prospects for social position and political power.

Regarding corporate news coverage of labour matters, Martin (2004) argued that corporate news media, through five dominant narrative forms, or frames, consistently

⁸ Newspapers are complex business enterprises that involve much more than writing stories. The corporate owners of newspapers must appoint persons who can link the production of content to other aspects of newspaper publishing, including advertising, printing, distribution, and legal and financial matters. The term "news executives" here refers to those executives who appoint and oversee the "editors" described above, as opposed to executives who oversee other aspects of the business (Gans, 1979).

present the individual consumer as the dominant agent of economic life, lionize business leaders and entrepreneurs as the sources of innovation and prosperity, denigrate collective economic action as harmful, celebrate the workplace as a source of motivation and reward for the individual employee, and offer fleeting glimpses of the production process only when forced to by events with public impact. These frames can be discerned, for example, in CanWest regional newspapers' publication of the Fraser Institute's school rankings, news profiles of innovative teachers, editorials condemning strike action, etc. Just as Breed (1955) saw the expression of policy as informal, Martin describes the application of frames as an intuitive process.⁹ He acknowledges, however, occasional, extraordinary circumstances in which the corporate media may be forced to set aside preferred narrative forms, rather than risk alienating viewers, listeners, and readers.¹⁰ Martin had in mind the critical news coverage of the World Trade Organization conference in November 1999—the "Battle in Seattle"—when police forces used tear gas, truncheons, and rubber bullets against nonviolent demonstrators.

On many social and political matters, CanWest displays a strongly conservative policy, with scant regard for alternative views (Orlowski, 2006)¹¹. On labour matters in

⁹ "The act of framing is largely an act of common sense on the journalist's part. Unfortunately, common sense leads back to the familiar and traditional, and it often cuts off creative and imaginative news coverage" (Martin, 2004, pp. 7-8).

¹⁰ "The major news media are commercial, corporate media, and they generally frame news stories in ways that favor corporate interests. But, in cases of widespread democratic (and nonviolent) public activism by labor and other social groups, news cannot afford to be *seen* as acting on behalf of corporate capitalism. So, in these instances, the news media are unable to adequately frame labor news from their typical consumer economy perspective and must report at least some criticism of the production side of the economy to sustain their own credibility" (Martin, 2004, p. 198, italics in original).

¹¹ "CanWest Global trumpets the interests of big business, Israel, Christianity, and a socially conservative United States. Identical editorials with this conservative bias often appear in many

particular, CanWest—as does the rest of the mainstream press in Canada— consistently emphasizes and promotes the views of business leaders, and marginalizes the views of wage earners and trade unionists (Hackett & Gruneau, 2000)¹². Furthermore, anti-union sentiments at the top of CanWest's corporate structure may produce "slanted" news coverage at the bottom, as CanWest has been accused of undermining the independence of its editors and reporters (Hackett & Uzelman, 2003; Beers, 2006; Edge, 2007)¹³. If these allegations of centralized interference are true, this would affect readers throughout BC, where CanWest owns all three large daily papers—and one of two national papers— sold in Vancouver and Victoria, most of the small local papers sold around the province, and a 70% share of supper-time television news viewers—"a news hegemony unrivalled in Canadian history" (Gutstein, 2005, January 28, not paginated).

Breed (1955) defined newspaper policy as "the more or less consistent orientation shown by a paper, not only in its editorial but in its news columns and headlines as well, concerning selected issues and events" (p. 327). Given CanWest's "consistent orientation" toward conservative, anti-union positions, the BCTF's two-week-long shutdown of the

CanWest newspapers across the country. In comparison to its overt ideology, CanWest Global includes progressive journalism to an increasingly miniscule degree" (Orlowski, 2006, p.180).

¹² "While the voice of business is featured prominently as a daily part of social and economic discourse, labour organizations and their leaders and allies are pushed into the background, emerging only during strikes and other disputes to disrupt the smooth functioning of daily life. The result is a distorted view of the world of work, where those who arguably drive the economy—average working people—often find themselves excluded from the media agenda, or, worse still, victimized by it" (Hackett & Gruneau, 2000, p. 197).

¹³ "We hypothesize...that...with the emergence of editorially interventionist press owners like Conrad Black [Hollinger] and Izzy Asper [CanWest] since 1996, editorial positions influence patterns of news coverage. Insofar as editorial policy is set by corporate media owners rather than local editorial boards, it is a form of corporate influence" (Hackett & Uzelman, 2003, p. 334).

public school system certainly qualified as a significant policy matter for CanWest under Breed's definition, which is also congruent with the editorial policy conjecture, namely, that "the influence of owners and editors in shaping the news is considered to trump the influence of individual newswriters" (Gutstein, 2005, October 31, p.160). In accordance with Breed's definition, this study assumes that CanWest's policy on the BCTF in October 2005 was shown by the entirety of what was written about the BCTF in CanWest newspapers—in editorials, comments, and news items, in all markets. Note that Breed's definition does not require us to characterize or describe CanWest's policy regarding the BCTF, which could be impossible given the range of statements made about the BCTF in CanWest newspapers in October 2005. Instead, the definition requires us only to determine whether CanWest's policy was consistent across all article types and markets. Hence, the research question as presented in Chapter 1: How consistent was CanWest's editorial policy with respect to the BCTF in October 2005, across all article types and all markets?

2.2.2 Newspaper Bias

This section distinguishes between policy and bias, which is crucial to a study that depends on content analysis of CanWest policy on the BCTF.

In this study, editorial policy refers to the preferences (political, social, economic, etc.) of the owners and editors of newspapers, while bias refers to the use of covert means of persuading their readers to adopt the same preferences, through the falsification or omission of relevant facts. With this distinction in mind, one could say that the owners and editors of CanWest newspapers express definite editorial policy on selected issues or

events, openly and explicitly, without suggesting that they are hiding or distorting the facts, or trying to trick their readers into believing something that is not true.

The researcher maintains this distinction between policy and bias when reading others who write about CanWest. For example, when Gutstein (2005, October 31) cites differences of "agenda" between CanWest management and its journalists¹⁴, these are read as differences of opinion (policy) about the BCTF; when he alleges instances of "shoddy journalism"¹⁵, these are read as allegations of distortions of fact (bias). Similarly, when Orlowski (2006) writes, "Identical editorials with this conservative bias often appear in many CanWest newspapers across the country" (p. 180), the researcher sees this use of "bias" as ambiguous: While it is true that Canadian journalists strongly objected to CanWest's practice in 2006 of imposing unsigned national editorials on local newspapers¹⁶—which gave the false impression (bias) that local newspapers shared the views expressed—the national editorials themselves may have merely expressed the preferences of CanWest's owners (policy). Finally, while Breed (1995) consistently

¹⁴ "[S]ome CanWest commentators provided balanced and fair observations during the two-week long teacher-government stand-off. And some CanWest reporters provided a sympathetic account of the teachers' issues. ... / But they were at odds with the CanWest agenda, the framing of the dispute CanWest's senior managers attempted to convey to their readers..." (Gutstein, 2005, October 31, pp. 159-160).

¹⁵ "The organizational agenda could be seen in the framing Tony Parsons applied to his stories. On Day 3 he announced that teachers' solidarity was beginning to crumble as teachers started crossing the picket lines. However, Keith Baldrey had to correct him by saying that only a few teachers in small pockets around the province were crossing. Between 98 and 99% were still walking the line, he said" (Gutstein, 2005, October 31, p. 160).

¹⁶ CanWest's practice of imposing unsigned "national editorials" on local papers was discontinued, following objections by the Canadian Association of Journalists (McDiarmid, 2006). Since 2006, CanWest owner Leonard Asper has signed his name to articles that appear as opinion pieces.

associates policy-as-intention with bias-as-means¹⁷, his focus is always on the covert application of policy to news reporting—which this study calls bias—never on its open appearance in editorials and commentary—which this study calls editorial policy.

With this distinction in mind, we can read the extensive literature on media bias for insight into the challenges of locating, identifying, quantifying, and comparing indicators of editorial policy.

Much of the literature on media bias stems from allegations of partisan political bias in American news media. Niven (2002) described the "widespread belief" among Americans that mainstream news media—despite its avowed commitment to journalistic objectivity and neutrality—reflected the political views of news reporters. Niven claimed that perceptions of media bias are leading news consumers to seek out alternative, overtly partisan news sources, which cater directly to their personal views, especially on the radio and the Internet, and he warned that this trend threatens the commercial viability of mainstream news media.¹⁸ However, although American reporters tend to be more liberal in their political preferences than the general public, "there is little connection between reporters' personal political beliefs and the final reporting that emerges under their bylines.... In fact, a greater connection has been found between the personal beliefs of the executives and owners of media operations and the final coverage..." (Niven, 2002,

¹⁷ "Policy is manifested in 'slanting' [which] almost never means prevarication. Rather, it involves omission, differential selection and preferential placement, such as 'featuring' a pro-policy item, [or] 'burying' an anti-policy story in an inside page..." (Breed, 1955, p. 327).

¹⁸ "Long ago the partisan press died because its slanted coverage limited its market appeal to those with contrary views. Despite a long-standing economic imperative to produce neutral news, media outlets today find themselves almost thrust backward in time. For the media now, the central question may not be whether the media are biased, but whether they are perceived to be biased. A motivated, alienated constituency hungry for news is not going to endlessly consume newspapers and news shows that it considers slanted" (Niven, 2002, p. 49).

p. 57). Note that a weak connection between reporters' personal beliefs and news coverage is consistent with journalistic claims to objectivity, while a stronger connection between owners' and executives' personal beliefs and news coverage is consistent with the editorial policy conjecture.

Despite "widespread belief" in partisan media bias, many researchers admit that bias is inherently difficult to measure (Breed, 1955; Gunther et al., 2001; Niven, 2003; Groseclose & Mityo, 2005a and 2005b; Baron, 2006), and some researchers contest its reality: Niven (2002) found that some researchers into partisan media bias were "armed with dismay, but not evidence" (p. 59), and that others presented evidence that media coverage of issues and events merely reflects the range of options and views—liberal and conservative—expressed by government, and ignores alternative options and views that are ignored by government¹⁹. However, while evidence of "media indexing" may not support suspicions of partisan bias, it is consistent with a theory that corporate media sustain the social, political, and economic *status quo* (Hackett & Zhao, 1998).

D'Alessio and Allen (2000) conducted a meta-analysis of 59 studies of American presidential elections from 1948 to 1996, and found "there was no consistent partisan bias [that is, for Democrats or Republicans] in newspaper coverage of presidential campaigns" (p. 150), although "specific newspapers or specific reporters and editors can show substantial (and substantive) ideological bias. ... To the extent that there are newspapers whose coverage is biased in favor of Democrats, they are offset by newspapers whose

¹⁹ Niven here reflects the American context: In the USA, government includes the executive President, and all members of the legislature (Senate and House of Representatives), regardless of party affiliations. In Canada, government includes only the members of the governing party in the legislature, or parliament, and does not include members of opposition parties.

coverage is biased in favor of Republicans" (p. 148). Note the ambiguity of "bias" here: Are D'Alessio and Allen talking about overtly expressed political preferences, or covert means of promoting those preferences?

The focus of these American researchers is on perceptions of bias across the news coverage of all major American newspapers combined, not on the coverage provided by a single newspaper publisher, as in the current study of CanWest. For example, Niven (2002) compared news coverage of Republican President George H. W. Bush with news coverage of his successor, Democratic President Bill Clinton, at those times when the unemployment rate was equal for each president, and found that "in situations in which these presidents from opposing parties produced precisely the same results, they received very similar coverage" (p. 78). However, Niven's sample of 99,430 articles from 150 newspapers (p. 77) probably included many instances of partisanship, both overt and covert, which tended to balance liberal coverage in one newspaper with conservative coverage in another.

In summary, much of the literature on media bias compares coverage of opposing political forces—liberals vs. conservatives, Democrats vs. Republicans—across many media corporations, while the current study looks at coverage of one organization—the BCTF—by one media corporation—CanWest. Also, much of the literature conflates policy with bias, while the current study seeks to distinguish between them.

2.2.3 Some Studies of Anti-Union Bias

There is a considerable American literature on negative media coverage of labor unions, which has been characterized by Puette (1992): "The image of labor unions projected in the [American] press ... is one of corruption, greed, self-interest, and power";

sometimes "this anti-labor bias is heavy-handed and deliberate" but more often "the image of labor is colored by more subtle forms of bias that, because they may not be deliberate²⁰, have even greater potential for misinforming and stereotyping" when "coverage focuses on strikes and boycotts rather than on the working conditions or the wage inequities that may have occasioned them" (pp. 59-61).

The studies in this literature employ a variety of methods. For example, Schmidt (1993) searched the *New York Times* between 1946 and 1985, counting news articles about labor unions and calculating the proportion of articles related to strikes, and then compared these results with Bureau of Labor Statistics data on strikes, and with Gallup polling data on public approval of labor unions. She found that news coverage increasingly emphasized strike activities over the study period, while greatly exaggerating the occurrence of strikes, and that public disapproval of unions increased in proportion to strike-related coverage. From the National Labor Relations Board, Carreiro (2005) acquired a complete list of all formal allegations in 1999 of illegal firings for union activity, and then used online databases to analyze news media coverage of these firings: "The few anti-union firings the news media cover tend to be individualized and treated as isolated incidents, which diminishes the potential impact of the news story on the public's understanding..." (p. 2). Park and Wright (2007) studied headlines from the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Associate Press* over a twenty-year period, and found that "since 1980, business reporting has greatly increased at the expense of labor reporting" (p. 78). While these studies used relatively simple methods, Bruno (2009)

²⁰ Note that Puette distinguishes between bias as overt policy—"heavy-handed and deliberate"—and bias as covert means—"more subtle forms"—and adds that "they may not be deliberate", which is consistent with Martin's point about habitual narrative framing.

carried out a “multivariable, quantitative content analysis” on ten years of labor reporting from the *Chicago Tribune*, evaluating 386 articles on how the *story lead* and *content frame* characterized union activities; which adjectives were used as *labor signifiers*; whether most *information sources* were union sources; *internal agency*, ascribing action to a union; and *external agency*, ascribing action to an employer or government. For each article, positive and negative points were added, and multiplied by weights (longer articles carried greater weight), assigning to each article not only tone (positive or negative), but also distance from neutrality. This method lent considerable nuance to the study’s findings, which “confirmed organized labor’s anecdotal complaints about the paper [and] demonstrated that the [*Chicago Tribune*] largely establishes a negative tone in covering the labor movement” (p. 403). Bruno and two fellow readers coded to consensus on each variable for each article. As will be shown, the current study also evaluated the tone of articles as positive, negative, or neutral, but employed a simpler method²¹.

In a Canadian context—and of more relevance to the current study—Gunster (2008) also undertook a multivariable, quantitative content analysis, of coverage of the October 2005 BCTF strike by *The Vancouver Sun* newspaper and the television *News Hour*, both owned by CanWest. He coded all newspaper articles and television items for primary topic, key facts and arguments, sources, and source orientation to the strike, and found that “both news organizations maintained their focus upon the strike’s illegality

²¹ Bruno anticipated a basic finding of the current study: “Contrary expectations aside, news reporting, which cumulatively portrayed union behavior in an unattractive fashion, is actually more balanced than the paper’s editorializing” (Bruno, 2009, p. 393).

and its disruptive effects [and] remained committed to the ideological public of conventional strike scripts to whom the only thing that really matters is how, when, and to what extent they are inconvenienced” (p. 678)²².

For both Bruno and Gunster, detailed codings provided nuance for their findings, which was highly appropriate when their aim was to characterize the content of news media coverage, to determine whether it was biased against unions, and exactly how it was biased. For the current study, the researcher did not seek to characterize the content of CanWest newspaper coverage, but merely to determine whether its tendencies in tone were consistent across different types of articles and across different markets. This was a different question that could be answered by different methods.

2.2.4 Journalistic Norms

This section reviews journalistic norms, in search of characteristics of newspaper writing that could be used to assess CanWest articles for policy on the BCTF.

To avoid the imputation of bias, Canadian journalists adhere to journalistic norms set out in detailed codes of conduct (Cumming & McKercher, 1994; Canadian Press, 2004; Carney, 2008), continuing a long tradition of journalists reflecting on ethical practice (Johnstone, Slawski, & Bowman, 1972; Bennett, 1996; Society of Professional Journalists, 1996; Bell, 1998; Belsey 1998; Kieran, 1998; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007; Canadian Association of Journalists, 2002; Ward, 2005a; Ward, 2005b; Ward, 2006).²³

²² Gunster also anticipated the principal finding of the current study: "It is also worth noting that the pro-teacher disposition of the majority of The Sun's sources ... was not at all reflected in the paper's editorials, columns, or op-eds" (p. 672).

²³ Journalists also operate under complex legal constraints regarding the rights of the people they write about, the personal and institutional sources of their information, and the systems of power that they navigate, including courts, corporations, politicians, and police (Crawford, 2002).

For example, the Canadian Association of Journalists expects its members to "report all relevant facts in coverage of controversies or disputes", to "clearly identify news and opinion so that readers ... know which is which", and to "correct mistakes of fact or context promptly and ungrudgingly" (2002, webpage).

The following sections discuss the journalistic norms of fairness, accuracy, objectivity, neutrality, and balance, to consider their applicability to this study.

Fairness

In the literature on media bias, the concept of fairness seems to be primary, that is, not derivable from something more basic, and too difficult to define for the current study. For example, the activist organization Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting does not attempt to explain what fairness in a news item would look like, and instead suggests that fairness consists in diversity of viewpoints (including marginal viewpoints) across news sources²⁴, similar to the norm of balance within a single news item (see below).

Perceptions of fairness are also hindered by the hostile media effect: Vallone, Ross, and Lepper (1985) found that partisans of both sides of a contested matter perceived the identical news coverage as hostile to their side, and that perceptions of media bias increase with knowledge of the matter reported. Recent research (Gunther & Schmitt, 2004; Gunther & Liebhart, 2006) finds that perceptions of bias attach to journalism in

²⁴ "We work to invigorate the First Amendment by advocating for greater diversity in the press and by scrutinizing media practices that marginalize public interest, minority and dissenting viewpoints. As an anti-censorship organization, we expose neglected news stories and defend working journalists when they are muzzled" (FAIR, 2009).

particular as opposed to other forms of writing²⁵, which suggests that fairness in reporting is too elusive a quality to serve as a criterion for content analysis for the current study.

Accuracy

Failure to include relevant and accurate information could be evidence of editorial policy or article bias, and accuracy has long been a concern of honest news-gatherers. More than 2,400 years ago, Thucydides advanced the earliest known claim to journalistic accuracy, in *The history of the Peloponnesian War*.²⁶ To this day, professional journalists are zealous defenders of their reputations for accuracy.²⁷ Accuracy is an excellent criterion for assessing bias in an individual newspaper article, but it is not suitable as a criterion for the assessment of CanWest policy on the BCTF, as it would be impractical for the researcher to check assertions of fact in hundreds of articles. Furthermore, articles could be accurate in the sense that all their assertions of facts were verified, and yet be

²⁵ "Partisans in both groups were virtually identical in their perceptions of content when the author was a student; the same uniform perception appeared when the context was a composition unlikely to reach any audience beyond the classroom. However, when either the author was a journalist or the context was a nationally circulated news article, partisan perceptions diverged conspicuously. Under those circumstances, participants on opposing sides saw identical information as significantly biased in opposite directions—a direction counter to their own point of view" (Gunther & Liebhart, 2006, p. 462).

²⁶ "And as for the *actions* performed in the course of this war, I have not presumed to describe them from casual narratives or my own conjectures, but either from certainty, where I myself was a spectator, or from the most exact informations I have been able to collect from others. This indeed was a work of no little difficulty, because even such as were present at those actions disagreed in their accounts about them, according as affection to either side or memory prevailed" (Thucydides [431 BCE], translated by Smith, W., 1818, p. 16, italics in the original).

²⁷ Although at least one historian of newspapers would demur: "Having learned to write news, I now distrust newspapers as a source of information, and I am often surprised by historians who take them as primary sources for knowing what really happened. I think newspapers should be read for information about how contemporaries construed events, rather than for reliable information of events themselves" (Darnton, 2008, p. 73).

biased in the sense that they exclude relevant facts, regardless of the intentions of their authors.

Objectivity

Objectivity in journalism means adherence to professional standards for fairness and accuracy, regardless of journalists' personal preferences. Whether they pursue objectivity as a goal, or practice objectivity as a method²⁸, journalists upholding the norm of objectivity have changed the question from "Is this article fair and accurate?" to "Has the writer met the professional standards for fairness and accuracy?" Readers' perceptions of journalistic objectivity are crucial to commercial success²⁹ and to effective democratic discourse.³⁰ Nevertheless, some writers deride the norm of journalistic objectivity as

²⁸ For Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007), "[T]he discipline of verification is what separates journalism from entertainment, propaganda, fiction, or art. . . . Journalism alone is focused on getting what happened down right" (p. 80). In this view, objectivity is not a goal, but a method, namely, the consistent testing of information to ensure that the multiple biases of journalists do not undermine the accuracy of their journalism. Similarly, other norms, such as impartiality, neutrality, fairness, and balance, should be understood as devices that assist journalists in the verification of their accounts. "Their value is in helping get us close to more thorough verification and a reliable version of events" (p. 87).

²⁹ "If journalists were not viewed as being objective, every story could be criticized as resulting from one or another journalistic bias, and the news would be distrusted by even larger numbers of viewers and readers than is now the case. For this reason, objectivity is also a commercial consideration; indeed, the Associated Press is often credited with having invented objectivity in order to sell uniform wire-service news to a politically and otherwise diverse set of local newspapers" (Gans, 1979, p. 186).

³⁰ "[A]t the dawn of the twenty-first century, the notion that journalists or anyone else can arrive at a truthful account of things or follow an objective method of verification has been eroded in the public mind. This amounts to a threat not only to the notion of journalism but also to the possibility of civil society's confronting and solving its problems. The public sphere becomes an arena solely for polarized debate, not for compromise, consensus, and solution" (Kovach & Rosenstiel, p. 85).

merely covert means of sustaining the social, political, and economic *status quo* (Hackett & Zhao, 1998).

Ward (2004) advocates the reform of journalistic objectivity, away from the dead end of traditional objectivity³¹ toward a pragmatic objectivity that provides normative guidance for practice—fallible, practical, and imperfect—as do norms of objectivity in other professions, such as law, medicine, and public administration: "Objectivity in journalism ... should seek models in modern ways of practice, where a fallible, imperfect sense of objectivity is dominant and the goal is reasonable judgment in a context" (p. 263). Journalists, like other professionals, must acknowledge the value of objective standards in making decisions.³² Pragmatic objectivity in journalism must also be a positive doctrine, offering more than criticism of traditional objectivity—"[A]ny new theory of objectivity should retain what is of value in previous conceptions of objectivity" (p. 263).

Ward's philosophy of pragmatic objectivity was adopted as a general perspective for the current study (see Chapter 3). However, the journalistic norm of objectivity—that is, adherence to professional standards for fairness and accuracy—is no more suitable as a criterion for assessing CanWest policy on the BCTF than are the norms of fairness and accuracy on which it is based. The researcher would still face the practical impossibility of assessing hundreds of newspaper articles for their adherence to professional standards.

³¹ "Traditional objectivity is flawed by the mistaken belief that objectivity requires claims to be based on absolute standards or facts, as ascertained by neutral, perspective-less agents" (Ward, 2004, p. 261).

³² "In important areas of public life, such as law and professional ethics, glib talk of one interpretation being as good as any other does not rate serious attention. Instead, professionals work hard to develop reasonable, objective restraints on interpretations and value-laden decisions" (Ward, 2004, p. 305).

Balance

Balance in journalism means the presentation of alternative views of contested issues and events. The importance of balance to journalists may be illustrated by a news item from India about a temple dedicated to the worship of newspapers. The original story in the *Hindustan Times* balanced some obvious flattery of the press with mild self-deprecation, noting that "despite criticism faced by the media about its credibility, people here stand by their trustworthiness" (Kaiser, 2008, July 15). However, this mild balancing statement was not strong enough for the *Daily Telegraph*, which rewrote the story to cite, entirely without evidence, "mounting criticism over the media's overall loss of credibility, dishonesty and unreliability" (Bedi, 2008, July 18).

Balance sometimes means presenting minority or even marginal opinions as a counterweight to majority opinions, something highly valued in liberal democracies. However, balanced coverage lends not only dignity to dissenting voices, but also credibility, which may be resented by those with differing views, especially when they see themselves as forming the majority. Some writers (Boykoff & Boykoff, 2004; Antilla, 2005; Carvalho, 2007), who hold that anthropogenic global warming threatens environmental catastrophe, complain of "balance-as-bias" when newspapers publish contrary opinions, given that "the scientific community has reached general consensus that immediate and mandatory actions are necessary to combat global warming" (Boykoff & Boykoff, 2004, p.131). However, what these writers call bias (covert means of persuasion) may sometimes reflect the actual policy (preferences) of the media owners.

Compared to fairness, accuracy, and objectivity, balance is a straightforward matter, easy to detect in an article, and is therefore a characteristic of newspaper writing

useful for assessing CanWest policy on the BCTF. For this study, balance in an article is defined as the presence of both positive and negative information, or overtly expressed views, about the BCTF.

Neutrality

Neutrality has various usages in the literature on media, sometimes as a synonym for objectivity, or impartiality, or balance. In this study, neutrality in an article is defined as the absence of distinctly positive or negative factual information, or overtly expressed views, about the BCTF. This definition does not eliminate subjective aspects of judging whether an article is neutral about the BCTF, but it does ask readers to make inferences about the BCTF, rather than inferences about the author of the article. For example, many articles refer to the BCTF's action in October 2005 as an "illegal strike". The above definition of neutrality asks the reader to judge whether this information is negative or neutral or positive with respect to the BCTF, not whether the author of the article is negative or neutral or positive with respect to the BCTF. Thus, the above definition does not change the fact that different readers will bring different perspectives to bear on the same article, but it does help them to focus on judging the same thing. Here it should be noted that the researcher judged most of the frequent references to the BCTF's "illegal strike" to be straightforward statements of a legal fact, while other readers may judge them to be negative statements about the BCTF.

2.2.5 Summary of Journalistic Norms.

This section has reviewed norms of professional journalism, established to avoid the imputation of bias, in search of characteristics of newspaper writing that could be useful in assessing articles for CanWest policy on the BCTF. The norms of fairness,

accuracy, and objectivity were found unsuitable for this purpose, but balance—as the presence of both positive and negative information or views—and neutrality—as the absence of either positive or negative information or views—were used in this study to develop the rubric for coding newspaper articles.

2.2.6 Alternatives to the Editorial Policy Conjecture

As presented so far, the editorial policy conjecture frames a story (to borrow Martin's term) of newspaper owners and editors promoting their preferences to the point of distorting the news, so that policy leads to bias, while journalists oppose this pressure, and defend their independence through journalistic norms intended to avoid bias, namely, fairness, accuracy, objectivity, balance, and neutrality. However, there are other groups that could be placed inside the story frame. Gans (1979) saw this thirty years ago, when he described the hierarchical news organization as an arena of power struggles among owners, editors, and journalists: "Even readers and viewers have some power, expressed by protest against and refusal to accept what they read and see, which is why journalists often worry about their credibility" (p. 81). More recently, Carney (2008) described contending forces bound together in a common enterprise: journalists upholding professional values, ideological owners seeking profits, readers seeking validation of their own preferences, and advertisers seeking customers: "News has traditional values, taught in journalism schools and practiced daily News also occasionally has a pronounced ideological bent that buttresses the outlet's marketing efforts with its audience" (p. xx). Carney emphasizes the symbiotic relationship between news media and their customers: "Notwithstanding tradition and ideology, all news media ... now rely heavily on advertising, sponsorships or subscriptions to survive. Their editors'

choice and presentation of news is heavily focussed on meeting the needs of their defined market and target audience" (p. xxi).

So, the literature suggests an alternative to the editorial policy conjecture, in which owners and editors, and perhaps journalists too, modify the expression of their own preferences to satisfy the preferences of advertisers and readers. This alternative will be revisited in the discussion of the results in Chapter 5.

2.3 Empirical Literature

The previous section reviewed theoretical literature on newspaper policy, bias, and journalistic norms, in search of characteristics relevant to the assessment of CanWest policy on the BCTF. This section reviews empirical literature for relevant frameworks and methods.

2.3.1 Framework for Analysis

As a framework for content analysis in the policy sciences, Lasswell (1968) presented a seven-element model of communication, which asks "who, with what intentions, in what situations, with what assets, using what strategies, reaches what audiences, with what result?" (Lasswell, 1968, p. 62, quoted in Howland, Becker, & Prelli, 2006, p.208). Applying this model to CanWest's coverage of the BCTF would focus inquiry on the "results":

who	CanWest Global Communication Corporation
with what intentions	to retain or increase CanWest's share of readers and advertisers; to promote a policy with respect to trade unions in general, or the BCTF in particular
in what situations	a province-wide, two-week-long, illegal strike by the BCTF, in the month of October 2005
with what assets	28 newspapers in national, regional, and local markets

using what strategies	editorials, commentary (columns, opinion pieces, letters) and news coverage
reaches what audiences	newspaper readers and advertisers
with what results	???

But exactly what results should the current study examine? Other studies might ask whether CanWest succeeded in retaining or increasing their share of readers, or in promoting a certain policy with respect to unions, and might then examine sales figures or public opinion polls for evidence. However, the current study asks how consistently CanWest’s editorial policy on the BCTF was expressed across different article types and different markets. So the question is, exactly what part of the content of the articles should the study examine?

Niven's (2002) studies on bias suggest an answer. Looking for partisan political bias in newspaper articles that linked unemployment figures with U. S. presidents, Niven combined four objective indicators—the number of articles per month, article placement, article length, and whether the president was mentioned prominently—with a coder’s personal estimation of the *tone* of the article as positive, neutral, or negative (p. 76):

The tone of the article is also considered, based on a coder's estimation of whether the article was positive, neutral, or negative in its treatment of the president and the federal government. Specifically, articles were coded as positive if they credited the president or the federal government with a success, or credited either for trying to correct a problem. Articles were coded negative if they blamed the president or federal government for a problem or noted that either was uninvolved in a success. Articles that fit neither category, or suggested that both the president and the president's opponents were responsible for the situation, were labeled neutral" (Niven, p. 76).

This can be simplified: Niven coded articles as *positive* if they *credited* a moral actor with a *success*, and as *negative* if they *blamed* a moral actor for a *failure*. For the current

study, Niven's criterion of success-or-failure was relabeled as *impacts*, and his criterion of credit-or-blame was relabeled as *intentions*. Using these new terms for Niven's terms, Niven coded articles as positive if they indicated both positive impacts (success) and positive intentions (credit); negative if they indicated both negative impacts (failure) and negative intentions (blame); and neutral if they were neither positive nor negative. This worked well for his research objective, which was to compare news coverage of two U.S. presidents, George H. W. Bush and his successor Bill Clinton.

However, Niven coded articles as neutral if they indicated, for example, positive impacts without also indicating positive intentions. So, his approach had to be adjusted for the current study, by splitting his single judgment into two judgments, one on *impacts* of BCTF actions on others, another on *intentions* underlying BCTF actions. The results of these two judgments were then combined to determine the *tone* of each article, as will be described in Chapter 3.

Neither Niven's criteria—success-or-failure and credit-or-blame—nor the criteria used for this study—impacts and intentions—are defined in terms of simpler concepts. As standards for these criteria, the current study employed the terms *negative* and *positive* for indications of impacts (and intentions) in the article, *neutral* for the absence of indications, and *balanced* for the presence of both negative and positive indications.

Following Lasswell's example of a model for communication, the researcher developed a model for moral action (intentional action that has an impact on others), articulating the process of moral action into a sequence of elements, in which an *actor* with *intentions* performs *actions* with *impacts* on *recipients*, for which an *observer* makes a *report*. In this study, the *actor* is the BCTF, with *intentions* (positive or negative)

underlying its *actions*, which have *impacts* (positive or negative) on *recipients* (children, parents, the public, etc.); the *observer* (editor, columnist, reporter, etc.) writes a *report* (editorial, column, news item, etc.), from which readers infer impacts and intentions:

actor	BCTF
intentions	negative, neutral-or-balanced, positive
action	strike actions
impacts	negative, neutral-or-balanced, positive
recipient	children, parents, the public, etc.
observer	editor, columnist, reporter, etc.
report	editorial, column, news item, etc.

Based on the above considerations, the study developed a two-question rubric, regarding impacts and intentions, to assess each article for tone with respect to the BCTF. The two-question rubric will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

2.3.2 Units of Analysis

As shown above, Breed's definition of policy, and the editorial policy conjecture, both assume that CanWest's editorial policy on the BCTF was expressed through the entire corpus of articles on the BCTF published in CanWest newspapers. This prompts consideration of the appropriate unit of analysis. For content analysis, Neuendorf (2002) distinguishes between the unit of data collection—"the element on which each variable is measured"—and the unit of analysis—"the element on which data are analyzed and for which findings are reported" (p. 13). For this study, the unit of data collection is the individual CanWest newspaper article about the BCTF, and the variable measured is the article's tone with respect to the BCTF. This is similar to Niven's (2002) measurement of tone in articles about American presidents. However, the units of analysis for this study

are not the individual articles, but whole categories of articles, namely, different article types (editorials, comments, news) and different markets (national, regional, local).

The units of analysis follow from the decision to test the editorial policy conjecture, which holds that the editorial policy of CanWest with respect to the BCTF is expressed not only in CanWest editorials, but also in CanWest news coverage. These two article types differ in two crucial aspects: First, editorial writers argue their own case in support of their own positions, while news reporters attribute all overt arguments and positions to other persons (sources). Second, newspaper editorials are always unsigned, indicating that responsibility for the content lies with the newspaper as a corporate entity, and not with the editorial writer as an individual. Most news stories are signed³³, indicating that it is the individual reporter who is responsible for the content. These two categories have distinct rhetorical functions: While editorials explicitly urge readers to think in certain ways about important matters, news stories purport to present readers with all the facts they need to think for themselves. Between these two distinct article types lies a third type, with intermediate characteristics: Similar to editorialists, the writers of comments present their own arguments; unlike editorials, comments are always signed, indicating that responsibility for the content should be understood as individual, not corporate. These three broad types of articles, which are easily distinguished from each other, comprise the entire corpus of articles read for this study, and would suffice for a valid test of the editorial policy conjecture. For the sake of thoroughness, two other categorizations were included in the study. First, the articles in the comments type were

³³ Unsigned news stories are generally news briefs and factual backgrounders, which have been redacted from earlier news items. The lack of signatures could indicate that news editors were confident that all factual assertions had been checked and would easily withstand challenge.

sorted into three subtypes: columns by regular paid contributors, opinion pieces by *ad hoc*, unpaid contributors, and letters from readers. Second, all articles in the study were sorted by market: national, BC regional, and BC local.

The presentation of the units of analysis follows from the qualitative nature of the study, despite its production of numerical data: Categories of articles will be represented by their visual *profiles*, which are simple bar graphs, and compared using statistical tests, as described in Chapter 3.

2.3.3 Validity and Reliability of the Rubric

According to a standard textbook on content analysis, *validity* denotes "the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects what humans agree on as the real meaning of a concept," and *reliability* refers to "the extent to which a measuring procedure yields the same results on repeated trials" (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 12).

Validity

As shown above, this study defines the *tone* of an article as the combination of its indications of impacts and intentions; this definition underlies a two-question rubric that was applied to each article. This is similar to the definition used by Niven (2002), who sought out polarized articles—those which credited someone for a success (positive intentions with positive impact) or blamed someone for a failure (negative intentions with negative impact)—and then classified all remaining articles as neutral. As will be shown in Chapter 3, the current study also identified the polarized articles, but did not classify all remaining articles as neutral. Chapter 4 will give several examples of the application of the rubric to the CanWest corpus of articles. The researcher makes no claims for the

validity of the rubric beyond the current study, but hopes the criteria of impacts and intentions may be useful in other studies.

Reliability

For content analysis, Weber (1985) describes three types of reliability: *stability*, the extent to which one coder makes the same coding decisions when coding the same material more than once; *reproducibility*, also known as intercoder reliability, the extent to which multiple coders make the same coding decisions when coding the same material; and *accuracy*, the extent to which coding decisions match an established standard or norm. Stability is too weak to convince many readers, while accuracy is generally reserved for training purposes. "High reproducibility is a minimum standard for content analysis. This is because stability measures the consistency of the individual coder's private understandings, whereas reproducibility measures the consistency of shared understandings (or meaning) held by two or more coders" (p. 17).

Intercoder reliability testing for media studies can be daunting, given the large amounts of data involved. For example, Niven's comparison of polarized news coverage of presidents from opposing parties employed twenty trained coders, each responsible for almost 5,000 articles (Niven, 2002, p. 76). To be most effective, intercoder reliability usually requires training to consensus among coders over several sessions: "Three words describe good coder preparation: Train, train, and train" (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 133). The researcher's attempts to assure reliability for this study, which will be discussed in Chapter 3, included an intercoder reliability test of the coding rubric, and chi-square tests of the profiles of different categories of articles.

2.4 Summary of Literature Review

This is a qualitative research project for which the researcher used literature on newspaper policy and bias, journalistic norms, and content analysis to devise a rubric with which to measure tone (impacts plus intentions) in hundreds of newspaper articles. Using bar graph profiles of categories of articles, the researcher looked for patterns in this data, and interpreted those patterns in the context of the literature on policy. Creswell (1994) defined qualitative research as "an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting" (p. 1). The current study is more modest, attempting to build a simple picture of CanWest's coverage of the BCTF, sufficient to test the editorial policy conjecture.

3 METHODS

As stated in Chapter 1, this is a qualitative study of CanWest's newspaper coverage of the BCTF in October 2005, to compare the overall tone of editorials, comments, and news articles across national, regional, and local markets, and to compare the overall tone of coverage between three newspapers available throughout BC. This chapter explains the methods used by the researcher to produce, record, and analyze the data, to illustrate the results, and to test the reliability of the results.

3.1 General Perspective

This is a qualitative study that employs both qualitative and quantitative methods. The researcher devised a two-question rubric to guide his coding of 743 newspaper articles for tone with respect to the BCTF. He recorded his coding of each article in a database, and used numerical and graphical methods to summarize and illustrate the results for categories of articles. The study was guided by a perspective of pragmatic objectivity, as described by Ward (2006):

Inquiry interprets events with the assistance of *conceptual schemes*. The inquirer can inform and improve his or her schemes of understanding but can never completely transcend them. The inquirer understands phenomena holistically, against a background of *preexisting ideas* that form the content of his or her conceptual schemes. The objective evaluation of ideas is holistic, also. Beliefs are objective insofar as they satisfy, to some degree, the best available epistemic standards. Objectivity comprises general standards for all modes of inquiry and *specific standards* for the domain in question. The objective standards can serve as criteria of justification because they have contributed to successful inquiry in the past (Ward, 2006, pp. 264-265, italics added).

The *conceptual schemes* used by the researcher include the two-question rubric that guided his evaluations of newspaper articles, the database in which the evaluations were recorded, and the numerical and graphical methods used to report the results. This

chapter describes these conceptual schemes, indicates *pre-existing ideas* that informed the researcher's development of the rubric, database, tables, and figures, and identifies *specific standards* used in this study for reading and evaluating newspaper articles.

Pragmatic objectivity is consistent with a philosophy of critical rationalism, which holds that human reason and scientific knowledge are always fallible, that is, subject to error (Popper, 1962). This means that scientific theories are falsifiable conjectures, which we regard as close to the truth only so long as we have not shown them to be false. What makes a conjecture scientific then is not that it can be shown to be true by any number of confirmatory observations, but that it can be shown to be false by a single contradictory observation (Popper, 1959). Accordingly, this study tests the editorial policy conjecture by looking for evidence that could contradict it.

3.2 Research Context

For the most part, this study took place at a desk with a notebook computer connected to the Internet, through which the researcher accessed CanWest newspaper articles in online databases. After coding the articles and tabulating the results, he met with four student volunteers in a classroom at Simon Fraser University for an intercoder reliability test.

3.3 Research Participants

The research participants were student volunteers enrolled in a third-year class in the School of Communications at Simon Fraser University. The researcher invited them to attend a two-hour classroom session for an intercoder reliability test, in exchange for an honorarium. Their instructor forwarded the researcher's email invitation to the

students, and permitted the researcher to address them briefly in class. Four students participated in the intercoder reliability test on March 26, 2009.

3.4 Instruments and Materials

The researcher designed and compiled a database of CanWest newspaper articles from October 2005 that referred to the BCTF, designed and applied a two-question rubric to guide evaluation of the articles for tone with respect to the BCTF, and used the program suite Microsoft Office 2007 to record, analyze, and illustrate the results.

3.4.1 Project Database

The CanWest website identified 32 CanWest newspapers, which the researcher sorted into three groups according to markets: national—one paper sold across Canada and seven papers sold in large urban markets outside BC; regional—three papers sold in large urban markets in BC, and which are also available throughout BC, and local—21 papers sold only in local markets in cities and towns in BC. (see Appendix A).

Two Proquest online databases—Canadian Newsstand Pacific and Canadian Newsstand Major Dailies—included articles from 28 of the 32 CanWest newspapers (four of the local papers were not represented in the online databases), for the period October 1 to October 31, 2005 inclusive. Each of these newspapers was searched on a combination of keyword strings ("bctf" OR "teachers federation" OR "teachers union")³⁴, yielding 801 articles. The articles were entered in a Microsoft Access database using 16 fields: ID key, headline, author(s), newspaper title, market (national, regional, or local), day of week, date of publication, start page, article type (editorial, column, opinion, letter,

³⁴ The Proquest search engine is not case-sensitive, except for logical operators such as AND, OR, and NOT, and ignores apostrophes.

or news)³⁵, full-text, description of illustration (if any), word count, universal resource locator (URL), impacts, intentions, and tone.

For the ID key, Microsoft Access automatically assigned to each article a unique, random identification number between -2,147,483,648 and +2,147,483,647, which enabled random selections of articles: Whenever articles are sorted by ID keys, they are automatically placed in random order with respect to all other fields. For example, a person could query the database for news articles from local newspapers, use the ID keys to sort them into random order, use any method to determine a random starting point in the list, and select as many articles as required. This procedure was used to select articles for the intercoder reliability test, as described below.

For data analysis in Chapter 4, three of the article types (columns, opinions, and letters) are sometimes combined into a single type (comments), so that the results can be analyzed in terms of three general article types: (1) editorials, which are always unsigned; (2) comments, which are always signed; and (3) news articles, signed and unsigned, including event coverage, news briefs, factual backgrounders, sidebars, and interviews. The three sub-types of comments have their own distinct characteristics: (2a) columns are regularly submitted by paid journalists; (2b) opinion pieces are submitted occasionally by unpaid contributors; and (2c) letters are submitted by unpaid readers.

Of the 801 articles read for this project, 58 articles were duplicates or off-topic, and were left uncoded in the database. Duplicates are here defined as two or more articles with almost exactly the same content, published in different editions of the same newspaper. In every case, the latest version was kept, as the researcher found no

³⁵ This taxonomy simplifies the existing categories in the Proquest database.

substantive differences between versions that would have led to different codings. The articles that were off-topic referred to the Canadian Teachers' Federation, or to teachers' unions in other provinces. Duplicates and off-topic articles were discovered during the process of reading and coding, after all articles had been entered in the database.

3.4.2 Two-Question Rubric

While the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 helped the researcher understand bias and policy in newspapers, the researcher had to devise models and means for measuring policy in newspaper articles. Designing a simple, practical rubric that could be valid and reliable involved many false starts and fresh attempts over several weeks. The researcher was by turns frustrated and fascinated with the unfamiliar self-awareness of a familiar cognitive act, evaluating a newspaper article for its tone on a controversial matter. The rubric went through frequent iterations, alternating between complexity to enable it to capture nuances, and simplicity to make it easy to understand and use. Eventually, this process resolved itself into two questions, regarding impacts and intentions:

1. What does the article say about impacts on others of the actions of the BCTF?
2. What does the article say about intentions of the BCTF underlying their actions?

Regarding impacts, a newspaper article could include indications of negative impacts, or of positive impacts, or no indications of impacts (neutrality), or indications of both negative and positive impacts (balance). For example, negative impacts of BCTF actions on others included school children missing classes, parents being inconvenienced, and sporting events being cancelled, while positive impacts included evidence of sympathy or support for teachers, from students, parents, and fellow trade unionists.

Regarding intentions, an article could include indications of negative intentions, or of positive intentions, or no indications of intentions (neutrality), or indications of both negative and positive intentions (balance). For example, negative indications of intentions included expressions of indifference to the needs of others—children, parents, coaches of children’s sports, taxpayers, etc.—while positive intentions included expressions of concern for others—creating a better learning environment for all students, ensuring support for students with special needs, etc. Intentions were also inferred from strong indications of competency: negative intentions were inferred from indications that the BCTF was incompetent as an organization representing teachers; positive intentions, from indications that the BCTF was competent.

3.5 Procedures

For each article in the database, the researcher cut-and-pasted the headline and full-text of the article to Microsoft Word, applied the rubric to the headline and article, and coded the results in the database. Each article was coded on a three-point scale for impacts—(1) negative, (2) neutral-or-balanced, or (3) positive—and a three-point scale for intentions—(1) negative, (2) neutral-or-balanced, or (3) positive. The separate results for were then added to place each article on a five-point scale—(2) very negative, (3) somewhat negative, (4) neutral-or-balanced, (5) somewhat positive, (6) very positive—and this result was recorded in the database. After coding all articles, the results were tabulated, and simplified, for data analysis in Chapter 4.

3.5.1 Coding the Articles

Based on the combined headline and full-text of each article, the researcher made two judgments, one regarding indications of impacts on others of the BCTF’s actions, the

other on indications of the BCTF's intentions. These two judgments were then combined into one coding, for tone. This was thought a reasonable simplification of the data, as the research questions looked for differences between markets, article types, and newspapers, and not for differences between impacts and intentions.

Many judgments about indications of impacts and intentions were fairly easy to make, as the following examples (simplified here for illustration) may show:

- *Negative impact*—‘Parents are scrambling to find child care while the public schools are shut down by BCTF pickets lines.’
- *Neutral about impacts*—‘The teachers’ strike entered its second week today.’
- *Balanced impacts*—‘While most parents are upset with the teachers’ strike, and some students worry about the long-term impact on their marks, shopping mall merchants are happy with the increased business.’
- *Positive impact*—‘Parents in _____ rallied in support of striking teachers.’
- *Negative about intentions*—‘When some parents complained about unexpected picket lines, the local union president said, "What did they think was going to happen?" (indicates indifference to a negative impact on others)
- *Neutral about intentions*—‘Striking teachers set up picket lines around all schools early this morning.’ (no indications of intentions)
- *Balanced about intentions*—‘Many of the parents expressed sympathy for the BCTF’s public stance in favour of increased funding for students with special needs, but were wary that their own children’s interests could be sacrificed at negotiations in favour of teacher salary increases.’

- *Positive about intentions*—‘Striking teachers expressed concern about shrinking funding for ESL students and children with special needs.’

It must be noted that the coding procedure does not account for ironical readings. The researcher would accept at face value some statements about intentions, which other readers may have read ironically or even cynically. For example, the researcher would accept the following statement as expressing a sincere desire to avoid a negative outcome: “No one wants a strike, but the alternative would be a catastrophe for our entire system of education,” said the local union president.’

The writers of editorials and comments were often explicit in their negative judgments of the BCTF. For example, one columnist wrote, ‘[T]he teachers must also take the rap for abandoning their students. Parents all around British Columbia will be scrambling to find child-care today because the teachers' union has decided it is above the law’ (Smyth, October 7, 2005). This article was coded as *very negative*, because it combines indications of negative impacts (parents scrambling) with negative intentions (disregard for legal authority).

The writers of news articles often indicated intentions by direct quotation from sources. For example, one news article, about teachers voting on recommendations that could end the strike, quoted the BCTF President as saying, "From the beginning of this dispute, we have been very clear that teachers’ top priority is to achieve improvements to students’ learning conditions" (Lau, October 22, 2005). However, this article was coded

as N/B, not as Pos, because it also included indications of negative impacts³⁶ to counter this indication of positive intentions.

As this research project was focused exclusively on CanWest's coverage of the BCTF, the researcher ignored frequent criticisms of the BC Liberal government, which was the BCTF's opponent during the dispute. For example, one editorial, "Liberals painted the teachers into a corner," (Burnaby Now, October 12, 2005) strongly criticized the Liberal government, while remaining neutral about the BCTF. Another editorial, "B.C. in midst of battle royal," (Leader-Post, October 19, 2005) was equally critical of the BCTF and the Liberal government. The first editorial was coded as N/B and the second as Very Negative, although both may have given the BCTF a tactical edge over their Liberal government opponents in the context of the struggle.

Some news articles received more negative codings when reprinted in other CanWest newspapers at shorter length, eliminating balancing information. For example, one story in the *Vancouver Sun* (Hansen, October 11, 2005) included extended comment on the strike issues by BCTF President Jinny Sims, and was coded as N/B. The article was republished that same day in the *National Post*, *Star-Phoenix*, and *Leader-Post*, but was trimmed to half its original length by omitting the commentary by Sims, and was consequently coded as Very Negative.

The researcher's lengthy personal experience in trade union activity affected his perceptions of certain words. For example, in labour relations circles, the term "wildcat

³⁶ The article was explicit that teachers and students were not at school, and quoted a school board trustee as saying "In my mind, if this doesn't come together over the weekend, we've got a serious problem. ... If both parties don't think this can work now, we'll never get the train back on the track."

strike" denotes a strike initiated and maintained by rank-and-file members, beyond the control of the union leadership, and for which the union cannot be held responsible in a court of law. In that sense of the word, the BCTF strike was clearly not a wildcat strike. However, nine news articles used *wildcat* strike to denote an *illegal* strike, which is a usage that the researcher judged was pejorative. On the other hand, three articles placed quotation marks around "illegal" when referring to Madame Justice Brown's ruling on the strike. The researcher—not knowing what else was required to render a strike illegal if a Supreme Court ruling did not suffice—interpreted these quotation marks as sympathetic neutralizers of BCTF actions.

The researcher sometimes made inferences about intentions that were not explicit. For example, the following news item was coded as Very Positive, despite the reference to the "illegal strike." One could infer from this story that the main impact of the strike was to inspire the love of parents for the teachers' union, and that the intention of the BCTF was to spread happiness everywhere.

There are yellow, white and pink ribbons symbolizing various causes, and now there are green ribbons. Paddy Rose, a Nanaimo mother of two school-aged children, is starting a "fly a green ribbon from your vehicle in support of our teachers" campaign to help boost the morale of teachers involved in the illegal strike by the B.C. Teachers Federation.

The colour green symbolizes getting back to the grass roots and back to basics, said Rose. The ribbons are available at the BCTF office at 3137 Barons Rd., at Nanaimo-area fabric stores and at a number of schools in the city.

"I've written letters to the premiere [sic], other politicians and the Ministry of Labour to let them know that many parents support the teachers," said Rose. "Visually, this is a way to show teachers we're still behind them. This is my way of showing a bit more support.

"If teachers are in fact an essential service, then the government should treat them as an essential service," she said. "A happy teacher equals a happy child, which equals happy parents, so the government should sit down with them and make them happy" (Corbett, M., 2005, October 22).

Similarly, while it is clear from the following letter that the teachers' strike has negative impacts—"this mess"—the researcher's coding of Very Negative was based largely on the title, "Dunces are on the left too"—that is, on the news editor's (not the reporter's) indication of BCTF incompetence.

Why does [*The Province* cartoonist Bob] Krieger vilify our premier at any opportunity?

I do not recall him ever illustrating a dunce cap going to premiers Mike Harcourt or Glen Clark during past labour disputes between the B.C. Teachers Federation and the NDP provincial government. It seems only right-leaning dunces are deserving of Krieger's biting satire.

I could have understood and even agreed with this cartoon, had it contained some balance.

Perhaps the young person could have been shown to be confused as to whether the cap should be proffered to the premier or to the BCTF's Jinny Sims.

Brother Krieger once again over-simplifies a very complicated issue by implying this mess is entirely the fault of a government he so obviously despises (McCormack & McCormack, 2005, October 9).

Other articles could be much more direct: The news brief "British Columbia: Teachers' union faces fines of \$150,000 a day" manages to include stark indications of negative impact and negative intent in a mere 74 words:

B.C.'s 42,000 public school teachers vowed to continue their illegal strike today despite a court ruling that the union was in contempt of a court order and the threat of fines in excess of \$150,000 per day. The continued job action threatened to prevent 600,000 students from attending classes today. The teachers' union plans to go before the Labour Relations Board to ask it to reconsider its earlier ruling that the strike is illegal (Ottawa Citizen, 2005, October 11).³⁷

In summary, the two-question rubric enabled the researcher to code a large number of newspaper articles about the BCTF, by focusing attention on indications of two important aspects of the BCTF's actions, the impacts on others, and the underlying

³⁷ This tiny article also illustrates the subjective aspect of coding for intent: The researcher read the references to an illegal strike and the BCTF's appeal to the LRB as neutral in this context, and the reference to contempt of court as decisively negative, while other readers might have read the reference to the LRB appeal as sufficiently positive to counterbalance the reference to contempt.

intentions. However, the researcher did not contest the factual accuracy of accounts, he did not account for the likelihood of ironical readings, and he sometimes made inferences about intentions that were not clearly spelled out. This was a qualitative research project that aimed for consistency in one person's reading of a large number of newspaper articles, while making significant efforts to ensure that the researcher's perception of reality (as identified through the rubric) was similar to that of other readers.

3.5.2 Intercoder Reliability Test

The researcher prepared a test sample of ten articles for an intercoder reliability test, which was carried out by a group of student volunteers, with results (Appendix A, Table 1) that strongly support the researcher's codings of articles for this study.

All articles in the test sample were from the *Vancouver Sun*, with the proportions of editorials (n=1), comments (n=5), and news (n=4) in the test sample (n=10) in roughly the same proportion as editorials (n=6), comments (n=53), and news (n=50) in the *Vancouver Sun* (n=109). After randomizing all *Vancouver Sun* articles in the database, the researcher selected the first editorial, the first five comments, and the first four news articles for the test sample. The sample articles were selected from the *Vancouver Sun* because these were the first articles coded, and an early date was anticipated for the intercoder reliability test. When preparing the sample, the researcher thought that it might be useful if the sample were also a representative cross-section of the *Vancouver Sun* coverage; however, this feature of the sample was not utilized. See Appendix C for the coding booklet, and Appendix D for coding record sheet, used by the student volunteers.

With the approval of SFU's Department of Research Ethics, and the assistance of an instructor in SFU's School of Communications, the researcher invited students in a

third-year Communications course, by email and in person, to participate in the test. The researcher invited all students in the course by email (through their instructor), and spoke briefly to the students attending one lecture. Five students replied by email to accept the invitation; of these, four attended a single two-hour classroom test session on March 26, 2009, at which the researcher described the research project and the use of the rubric, guided the participants through practice coding of a few articles, and left them alone to read and code the sample of ten articles.

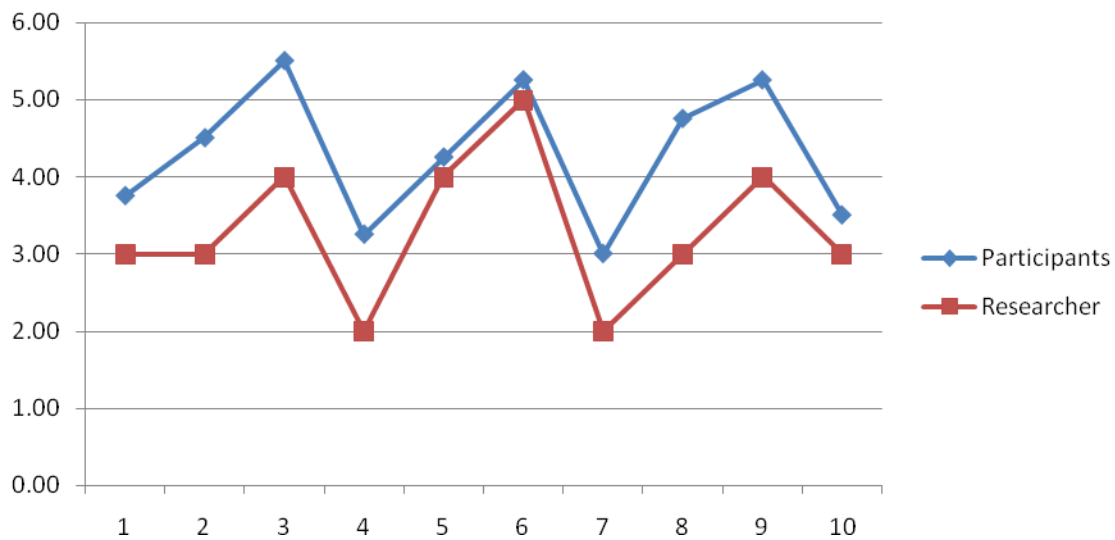


Figure 1. Comparison of codings for tone (Pearson's $r = 0.830$).

Figure 1 compares the researcher's codings for tone with the mean value of the codings of the student volunteers. The differences between these codings do not appear to be random, and a statistical test (Pearson's $r = 0.830$) confirms strong agreement between the researcher and the other coders. However, the researcher's codings were consistently lower (more negative) than the mean of the participants, perhaps reflecting his personal experience as a teachers' union activist during the October 2005 strike.

3.6 Data analysis

The data were analyzed and presented in a manner consistent with the qualitative nature of the study, using visual profiles of entire categories of articles to summarize the researcher's evaluations of individual articles. Statistical tests were applied to quantify the similarities or differences between profiles (Pearson's r), and to determine whether differences between profiles were the result of chance (chi-square).

3.6.1 Creating the Profiles

First, the researcher evaluated each article on two 3-point scales, one for impacts (negative = 1, neutral-or-balanced= 2, positive = 3), and one for intentions (negative=1, neutral-or-balanced=2, positive=3). Second, these ratings were added together to place each article on a 5-point scale for tone (very negative=2, somewhat negative=3, neutral-or-balanced=4, somewhat positive=5, very positive=6). Third, for graphical presentation, the ratings for tone were simplified by treating the ratings of very negative and somewhat negative as equivalents (both negative), and by treating the ratings of somewhat positive and very positive as equivalents (both positive). This placed each article on a 3-point scale for tone (negative=Neg, neutral-or-balanced=N/B, positive=Pos). The results will be presented in Chapter 4 as 3-bar graphs called *profiles*.

This simplification for graphical presentation was justified for two reasons: First, all of the articles with negative ratings on the 5-point scale shared the characteristic of lacking any positive rating for either impacts or intentions, just as all of the articles with positive ratings on the 5-point scaled shared the characteristic of lacking any negative rating for impacts or intentions. Second, the purpose of the study was to find patterns of similarity or difference among categories of articles, for which 3-bar graphs would serve

as well as 5-bar graphs. This way of reducing 5 scale-points to 3 scale-points produces different results than Niven's method, as described in Chapter 2. Niven's method would also have set up three categories of articles: one that "blamed" the BCTF for a "failure" (very negative), a second that "credited" the BCTF for a "success" (very positive), and a third that classified all remaining articles as "neutral" (somewhat negative, neutral-or-balanced, or somewhat positive). Niven's method was appropriate for his purpose, but had to be modified for the current study.

The researcher followed this three-step coding procedure to ensure that both criteria—impacts and intentions—would be assessed. In retrospect, an experienced coder employing these same criteria may have been able to code the articles immediately on the intermediate 5-point scale, or even on the final 3-point scale, with similar results.

3.6.2 Statistical Tests of Results

Pearson's Correlation (r)

Given two variables, Pearson's correlation test quantifies the degree of linear correlation between the variables. A value for Pearson's r close to +1 shows a strong positive linear correlation, while a value close to -1 shows a strong negative correlation, and a value close to zero shows a lack of linear correlation. For this study, the profile for each category of articles represents a set of three numbers (Neg, N/B, Pos), which in turn represent a variable we can refer to as the overall tone of the profile. Formulas for Pearson's r can be found in statistics textbooks. The researcher used Microsoft Excel 2007, which includes the built-in function CORREL (Array1, Array2), to calculate Pearson's r for selected profiles of article categories, and for the results of the intercoder reliability test.

Chi-square (X^2)

Given a population of values, chi-square (X^2) tests can be used to determine the probability that samples from that population are random, that is, to determine whether differences between the samples and the population from which they are drawn are due to chance. For the X^2 tests for this study, we note that the population profile for all articles gives directly the expected values for all samples from that population. We note also that the value for each of the three categories (Neg, N/B, Pos) has two degrees of freedom, since, once the values for any two categories are known, the value of the third is automatically fixed. To test whether differences between the population profile and a sample profile are due to chance (the null hypothesis), we set a level of significance for the null hypothesis (for example, $P < 0.01$), and calculate the X^2 variable for the sample against the population: For each category in the profile (Neg, N/B, Pos), we square the difference between the expected value and the observed value, and divide the square by the expected value. We sum the three category results as the obtained value of X^2 for the sample. Then, in a table of critical values for X^2 , for the given degrees of freedom and selected level of significance, we could look up the value needed for rejection of the null hypothesis, and compare the obtained value with this critical value (Sternstein, 1996; Salkind, 2007). For the current study, the researcher calculated X^2 directly using the online resource VassarStats (Lowry, 2009), which automatically selected the appropriate level of significance.

3.6.3 Limitations

Each article coded for this study was given equal weight in the results, although it is unlikely that each article had equal impact on the reading public. Thus the category

profiles support inferences about the content of different categories of articles, but do not support inferences about the relative impact of different categories on public opinion. Also, because this study distinguished between *policy* as the legitimate preferences of newspaper owners, editors, and writers, and *bias* as covert means employed to persuade readers to adopt the same preferences, the results of the study may support inferences about CanWest editorial policy, but do not support inferences about bias.

The Proquest online databases included seventeen BC local newspapers published by CanWest, but did not include four others: *Alberni Valley Pennyworth*, *Comox Valley Echo*, *Oceanside Star* (Parksville), and *Tofino-Ucluelet Westerly*. It is not known whether inclusion of relevant articles from these newspapers would have substantially altered the results for the local markets profiles.

3.7 Summary of Methods

For this qualitative study of CanWest's coverage of the BCTF in October 2005, the researcher devised a two-question rubric to guide his evaluation of a large number of newspaper articles, constructed an electronic database in which to record his evaluations, and used simple numerical and graphical techniques to analyze and present the results. This chapter has explained the methods used in this study; the next chapter presents the results obtained with those methods.

4 RESULTS

As stated in Chapter 3, this project found 743 newspaper articles (not including duplicates) that referred to the BCTF, published in 28 CanWest newspapers in October 2005, which the researcher coded for tone with respect to the BCTF. This chapter presents the results, to address the research questions posed in Chapter 1:

1. What were the differences between editorials, comments, and news?
2. What were the differences between columns, opinion pieces, and letters?
3. What were the differences between national, regional, and local markets?
4. What were the differences between regional newspapers?
5. What were the differences that appeared over time?

Each question examines the differences between categories in the proportions of articles that are negative, neutral-or-balanced, or positive about the BCTF. Each question addresses the editorial policy conjecture, that newspaper owners and editors dominate columnists and reporters in shaping the news.

4.1 Presentation of Results

Because article types and markets are intermeshed (each article belongs to both an article type and a market), this chapter presents the results gradually, from basic to more detailed, in six sections. After these presentation sections, the results will be summarized in terms of the five research questions.

First, basic results will show salient differences between article types, and between markets. *Second*, more detailed results will cross-reference article types with markets, and markets with article types, to show what underlies the salient differences. *Third*, comments will be analyzed in terms of subtypes (columns, opinions, and letters).

Fourth, results will be presented to compare three regional newspapers available throughout BC. *Fifth*, results will be presented to show trends in tone for news articles, and for all articles, over time. *Sixth*, results will be presented to compare the relative prominence given to news articles of different tone. Results will be presented throughout using bar graphs called profiles, which are visual representations of the percentage shares of articles of different tone within an article category. In addition to these results, the study will look at results for two indicators of the prominence that editors may assign to articles: the probability that an article will be placed on the front page of a newspaper section, and the probability that an article will be illustrated with a photograph.

4.1.1 Basic Results for Article Types and Markets

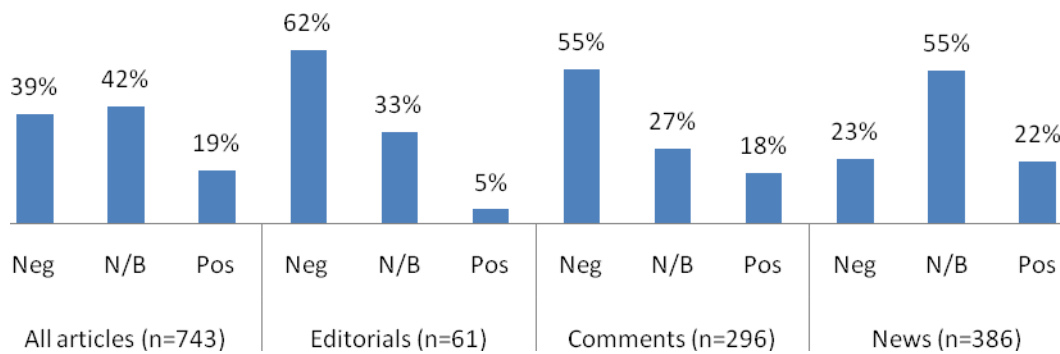


Figure 2a. All articles, sorted by article types.

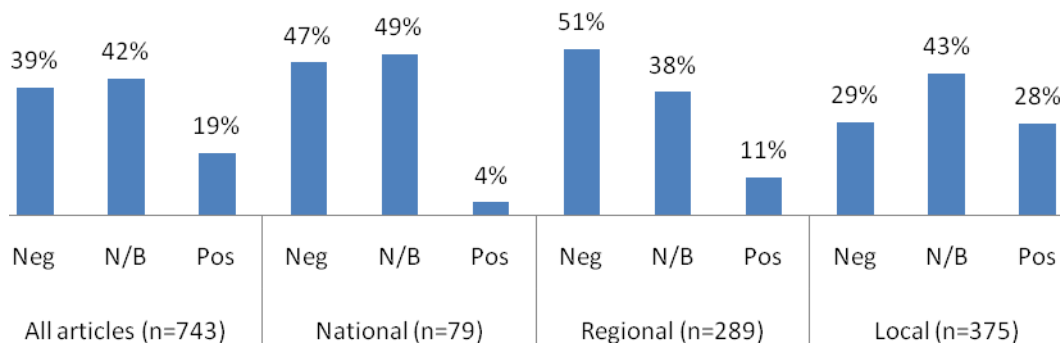


Figure 2b. All articles, sorted by markets.

Figure 2a shows all articles in the study sorted by article types, while Figure 2b shows all articles sorted by markets. The profile for all-articles (% Neg, % N/B, % Pos = 39, 42, 19) common to both figures shows a negative tendency; that is, although N/B articles predominate (they have the largest share), there are twice as many Neg articles as Pos articles.

When the articles are sorted by types (Figure 2a), the editorials profile (62, 33, 5) and the comments profile (55, 27, 18) are both skewed sharply to the negative, that is, Neg articles predominate. The news profile (23, 55, 22) is symmetrical, with N/B articles predominant. When all articles are sorted by markets (Figure 2b), the national profile (47, 49, 4) shows a much greater share of negative articles than positive, although N/B articles predominate slightly, and the regional profile (51, 38, 11) shows a negative skew. In contrast to both national and regional profiles, the local profile (29, 43, 28) is again symmetrical, with negative and positive articles in the same portions, and with N/B articles predominant.

To summarize the basic results, the profiles for editorials and for comments, and the profiles for national and for regional markets, all tend to the negative. The profiles for news articles, and for local markets, tend to symmetry, with N/B articles predominant.

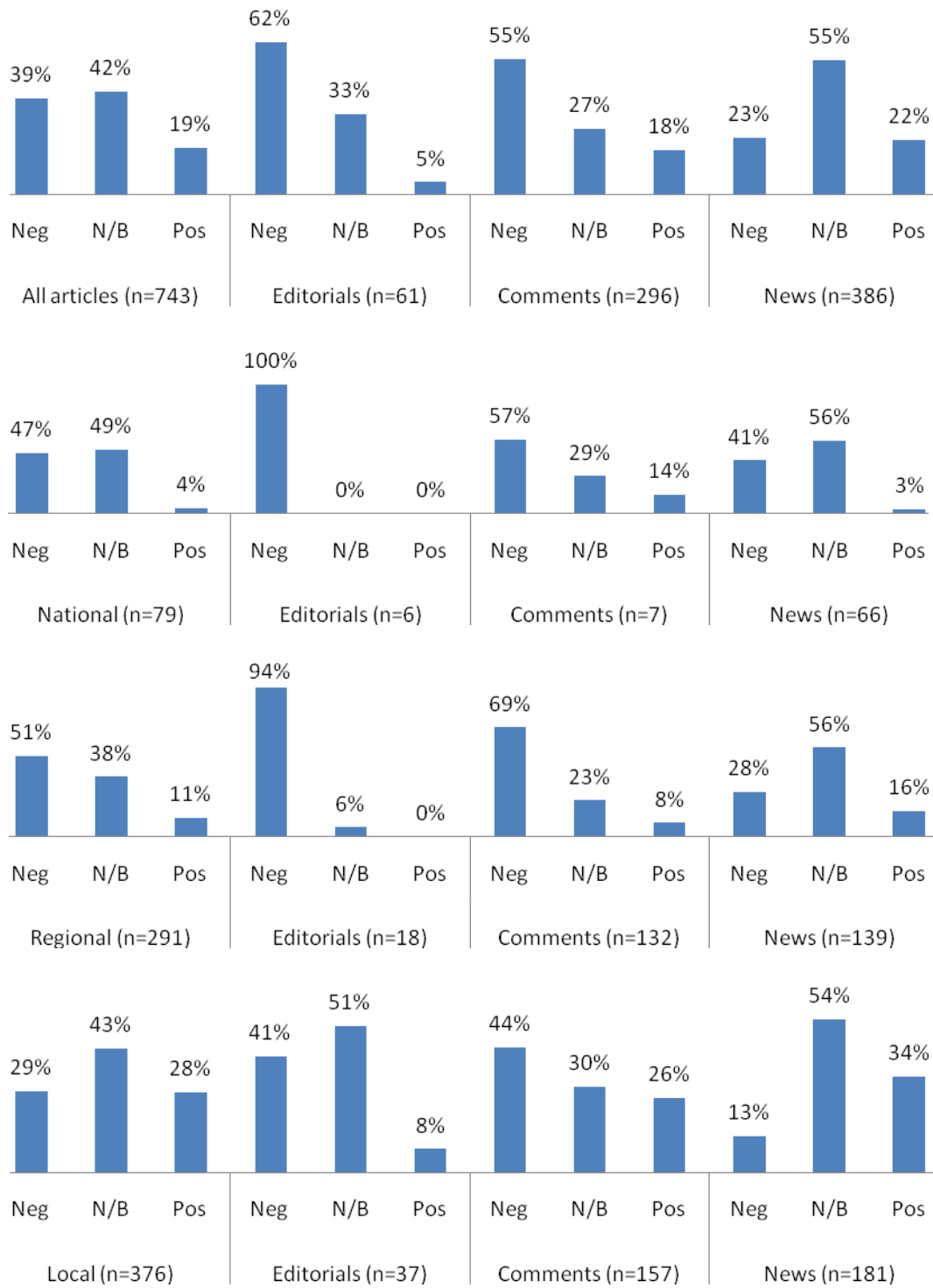


Figure 3. All articles, sorted by types and by markets.

4.1.2 Detailed Results for Article Types and Markets

These basic results will now be examined in more detail, using Figure 3. The detailed results will be described twice, first for article types, and then for markets. Please note that row 1 of Figure 3 is the same as Figure 2a (article types), while column 1 of Figure 3 is the same as Figure 2b (markets), now vertical instead of horizontal.

As previously shown in Figure 2a, when all articles (39, 42, 19) are sorted by types, profiles for editorials (62, 33, 5) and comments (55, 27, 18) both show a strong negative skew, while the profile for news (23, 55, 22) is symmetrical, with equal shares for negative and positive articles, and N/B news articles predominant.

When Figure 3 is read from top to bottom, these article types are further sorted by markets: row 1 corresponds to Figure 2a; row 2 shows article types in national markets; row 3, article types in regional markets; row 4, article types in local markets. Column 2 shows that editorials in national markets (100, 0, 0) and in regional markets (94, 6, 0) are almost entirely negative, while in local markets (41, 51, 8), N/B editorials predominate. In column 3, the profiles for comments in all markets show a negative skew, very strong in national markets (57, 29, 14) and in regional markets (69, 23, 8), but weaker in local markets (44, 30, 26). The profiles for news articles in column 4 show a definite trend from national (41, 56, 3) to regional (28, 56, 16) to local markets (13, 54, 34): While the share of N/B news articles remains almost constant across all markets, the share of Neg news articles declines as the share of Pos news articles rises.

As previously shown in Figure 2b, when all articles (39, 42, 19) are sorted by markets, profiles for national markets (47, 49, 4) and regional markets (51, 38, 11) show

much larger shares of Neg articles than Pos, while the profile for local markets (29, 43, 28) shows equal shares of Neg and Pos articles, and N/B articles predominant.

When Figure 3 is read from left to right, these markets are further sorted by article types: column 1 of Figure 3 corresponds to Figure 2b; column 2 shows all editorials sorted into national, regional, and local markets; column 3, all comments sorted by markets; column 4, all news sorted by markets. In row 2, national editorials (100, 0, 0) are entirely Neg, national comments (57, 29, 14) are strongly skewed to the negative, and national news articles (41, 56, 3) are much more likely to be Neg than Pos, although N/B news articles predominate. In row 3, regional profiles follow a similar pattern: regional editorials (94, 6, 0) and comments (69, 23, 8) tend sharply to the negative, and regional news (28, 56, 16) shows more Neg articles than Pos, but with N/B news predominant. However, in row 4, the profiles for local markets differ greatly from both national and regional profiles: half of all local editorials (41, 51, 8) are N/B, while local comments (44, 30, 26) are much less skewed to the negative, and local news articles (13, 54, 34) are overwhelmingly N/B or positive.

To summarize with respect to article types, editorials and comments tend to the negative in all markets, although much less so in local markets, while news articles are predominantly N/B in all markets, with large shares of Neg news articles in national and regional markets, and a large share of Pos news articles in local markets.

To summarize with respect to markets, national and regional markets both show clear tendencies to the negative for editorials and comments, and with consistently more Neg news articles than Pos, although N/B news articles predominate. In contrast, local markets differ from both national and regional markets for all article types, with N/B

editorials predominant, with higher shares of N/B and Pos comments, and with a much higher share of Pos news articles.

4.1.3 Comment Subtypes: Columns, Opinions, and Letters

As previously shown in Figure 2a, the profile for all comments (55, 27, 18) is skewed to the negative. Figure 4 decomposes this profile into markets and subtypes to produce further profiles that are all skewed to the negative. The national profiles for columns, opinions, and letters are based on small groups of articles, but the regional and local profiles are based on large groups. Comparing profiles between regional and local markets, local market profiles show, for all comments subtypes, smaller shares of Neg articles, and larger shares of Pos articles. Specifically, although regional columns (69, 31, 0) and local columns (63, 34, 3) show negative skews that are similar, regional opinions (80, 20, 0) tend more to the negative than local opinions (56, 22, 22), and regional letters (68, 17, 14) tend much more to the negative than local letters (38, 29, 33).

In summary, the results for comments subtypes are consistent with the results for comments in general, with negative tendencies in all markets, although noticeably less so in local markets than in national and regional markets.



Figure 4. Comments, sorted by markets and subtypes.

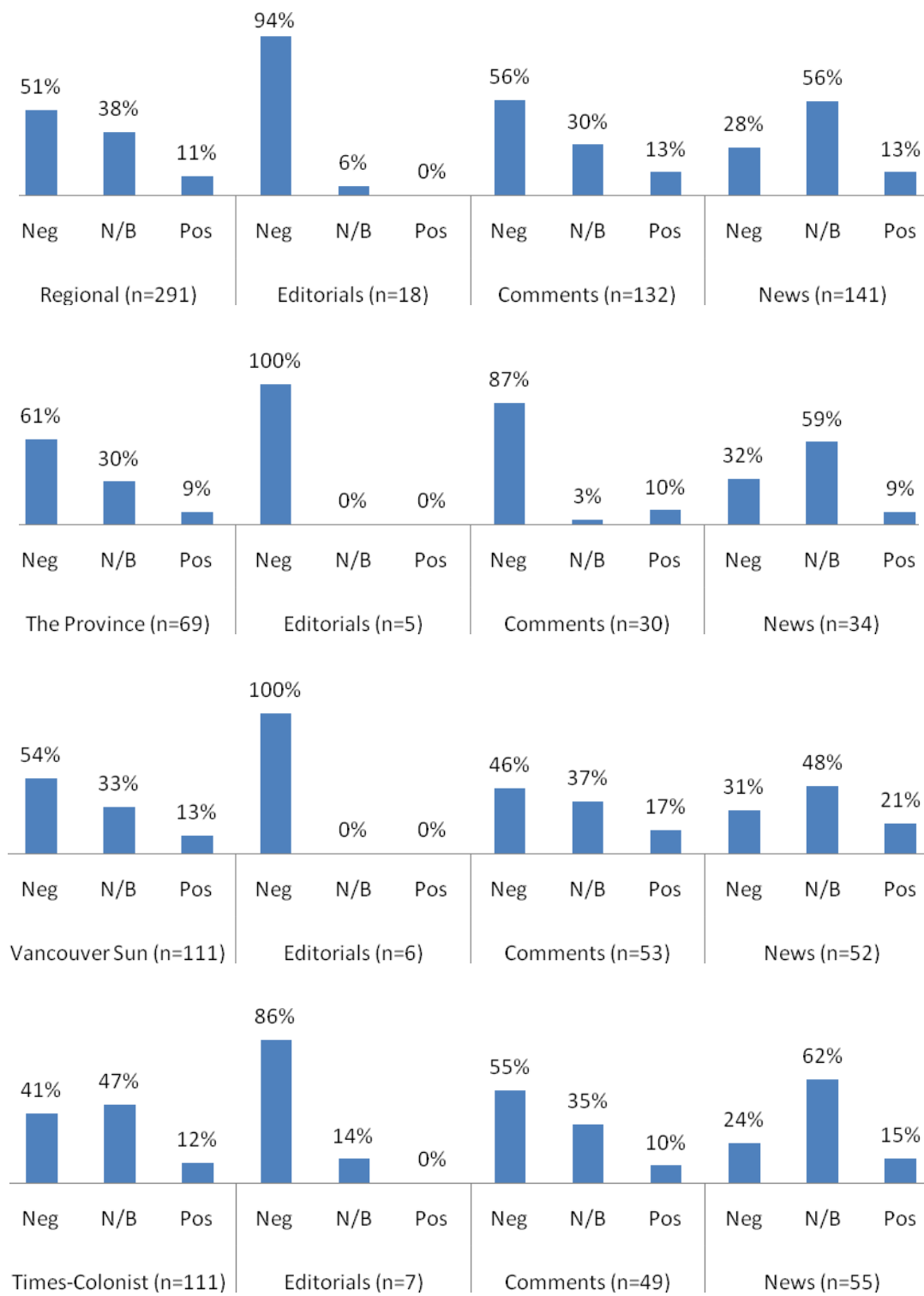


Figure 5. Results for regional newspapers.

4.1.4 Regional Newspapers

As previously shown in Figure 2b, the profile for regional articles (51, 38, 11) is skewed to the negative. In Figure 5, this profile is decomposed by article types, for three regional newspapers, *The Province*, *Vancouver Sun*, and *Times-Colonist*. In row 1, the regional editorials profile (94, 6, 0) is almost entirely negative, while the regional comments profile (56, 30, 13) is skewed to the negative, and the regional news profile (28, 56, 13) shows twice as many Neg articles as Pos, although N/B articles predominate. In column 1, *The Province* shows a negative skew for all articles (61, 30, 9), as does the *Vancouver Sun* (54, 33, 13), while for the *Times-Colonist* (41, 47, 12), N/B articles are predominant. Column 2, based on small numbers of articles, shows overwhelmingly negative editorials for all three newspapers: *The Province* (100, 0, 0); *Vancouver Sun* (100, 0, 0); *Times-Colonist* (86, 14, 0). In column 3, while profiles for *Vancouver Sun* comments (46, 37, 17) and *Times-Colonist* comments (55, 35, 10) are both skewed to the negative, the profile for *The Province* comments (87, 3, 10) is overwhelmingly negative. News profiles for all three newspapers are similar: *The Province* (32, 59, 9); *Vancouver Sun* (31, 48, 21); *Times-Colonist* news (24, 62, 15).

To summarize the results for regional newspapers, all three are overwhelmingly negative in editorials; comments in *The Province* are overwhelmingly negative compared to the other two newspapers; news coverage in all three newspapers is strongly N/B.

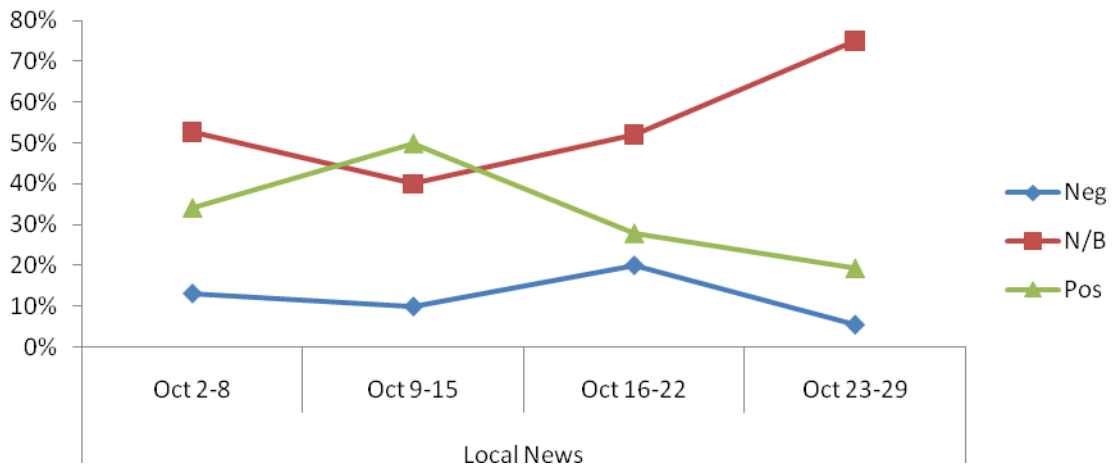
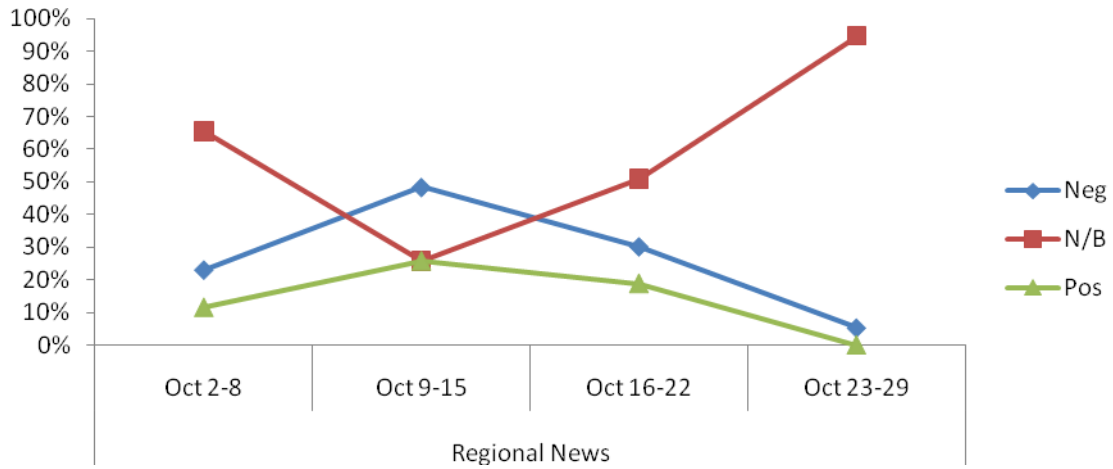
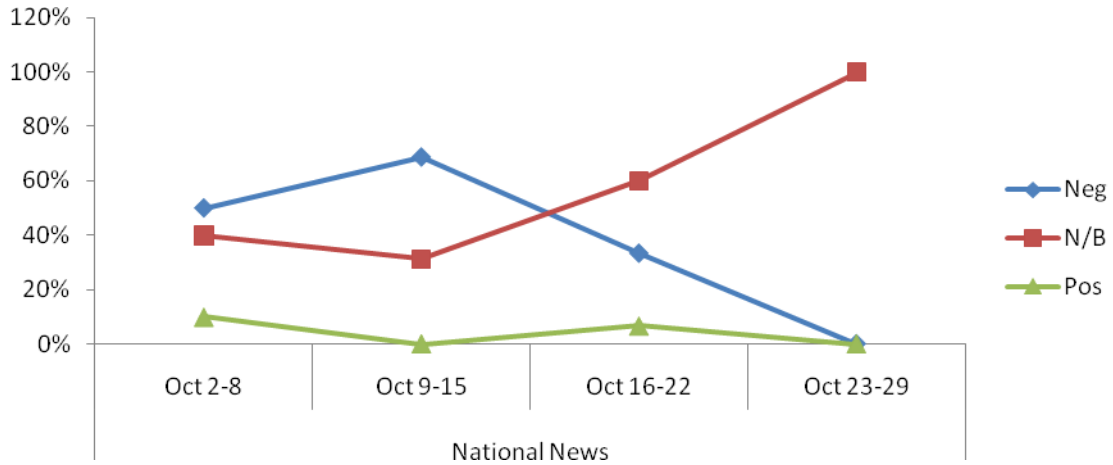


Figure 6a. Trends in tone over time for news articles about the BCTF.

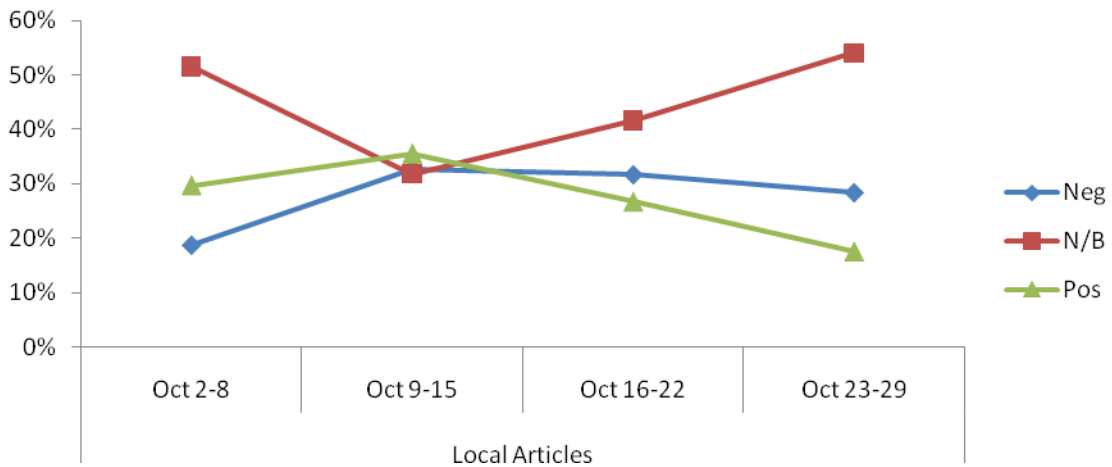
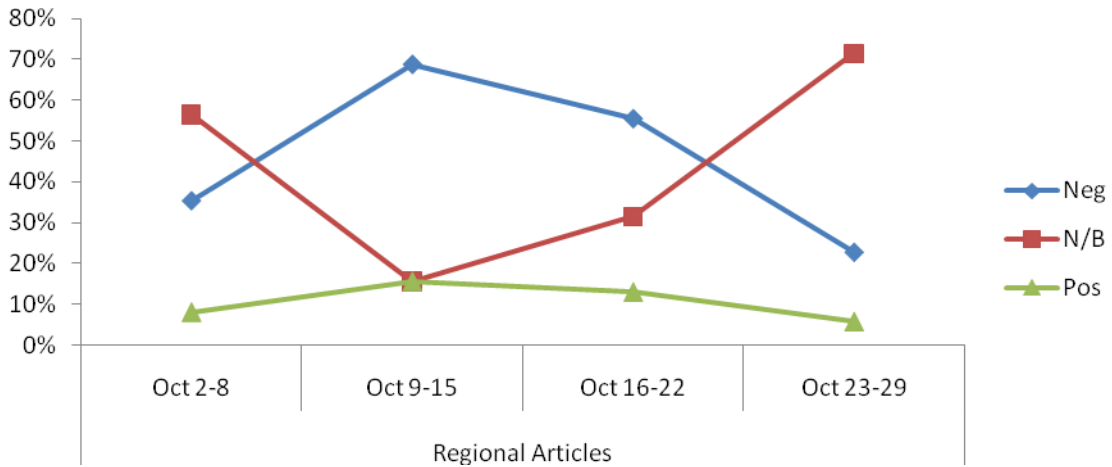
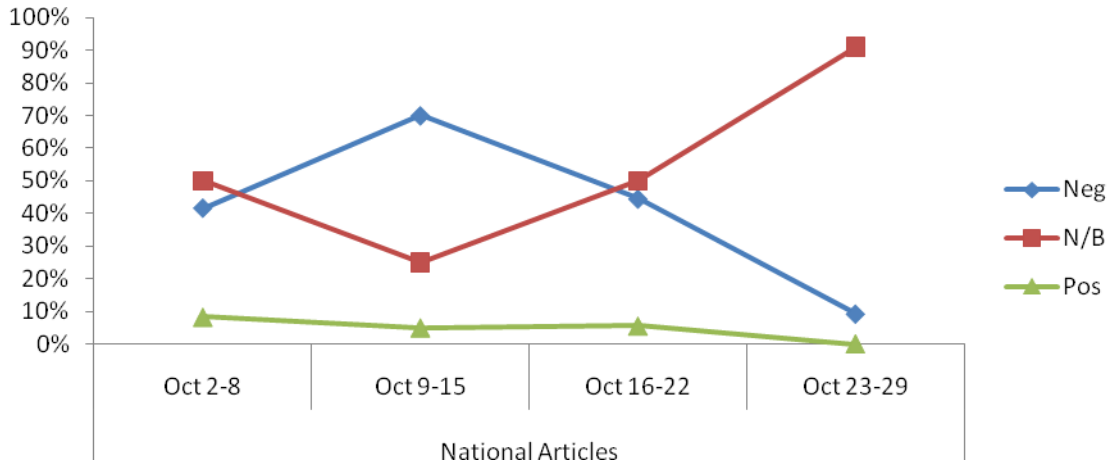


Figure 6b: Trends in tone over time for all articles about the BCTF.

4.1.5 Trends in Tone over Time

The distribution of Neg, N/B, and Pos news articles about the BCTF varied over time in all markets, with a similar pattern for national and regional markets, and a different pattern for local markets (Figure 6a). For newspapers in national and regional markets, trends in the shares of Neg and N/B news articles were in inverse proportion: As the share of N/B news fell, the share of Neg news rose, and vice versa. Also, for national and regional markets, the share of Pos news was always less than the share of Neg news, and only once was equal to the share of N/B news. In contrast, for local markets, it was the share of Pos news that rose and fell in inverse proportion to the share of N/B news, and the share of Neg news that was always the smallest.

The same observations could be made for trends in tone over time of all articles (Figure 6b): For national and regional markets, N/B articles and Neg articles rose and fell in inverse proportion, with Pos articles always holding the smallest share; for local markets, N/B articles and Pos articles were in inverse proportion, with Neg articles always holding the smallest share.

To summarize for trends in tone over time, there is a definite difference between markets: As the teachers' strike got under way, both national and regional markets saw increased shares of Neg news stories about the BCTF, while local markets saw an increased share of Pos news stories. As the strike concluded, the share of N/B news stories increased to dominance in all markets. This is consistent with Martin's observation (see note 10 above) that corporate news media must sometimes moderate their news coverage "in cases of widespread democratic (and nonviolent) public activism by labor and other social groups" (2004, p. 198).

4.1.6 Prominence

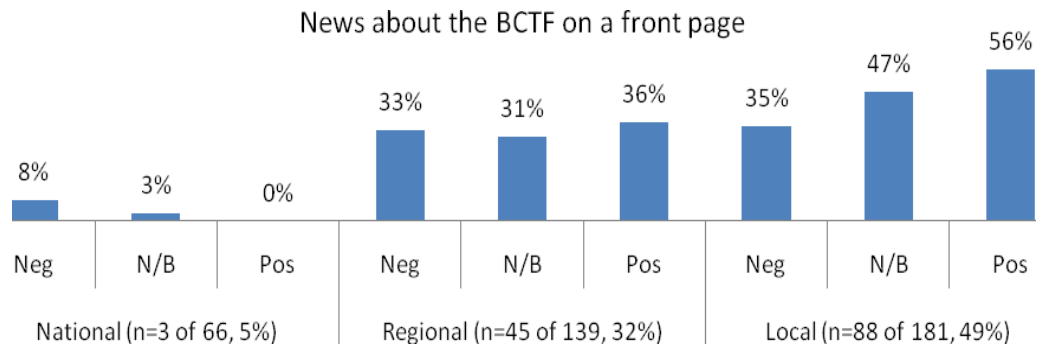


Figure 7a. News articles on a front page: Probability that a news article on the BCTF was published on the front page of a newspaper section, given its tone, sorted by markets.

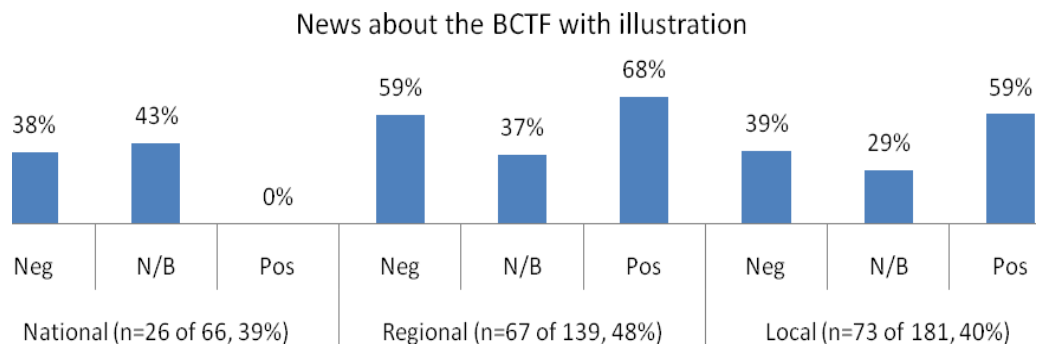


Figure 7b. News articles illustrated: Probability that a news article on the BCTF was illustrated with a photograph, given its tone, sorted by markets.

This study calculated two indicators of the relative prominence that editors gave to news articles of different tone: the probabilities that Neg, N/B, or Pos news articles would be published on the front page of a newspaper section, and the probabilities that they would be illustrated with photographs. Editors are able to employ various techniques—without altering the text of articles—to draw readers' attention toward or away from particular issues or events—techniques that Breed (1955) characterized as policy "slanting" (note 17 above)—including headline writing, article placement, and

illustration. This study included headlines with the text of articles in the coding process, which leaves front page placement and photographic illustration as two "slanting" techniques that can be readily examined in the Proquest online databases.

Regarding placement of news articles on a front page (Figure 7a), both regional and local newspapers gave much greater prominence than national newspapers to news articles on the BCTF: In national newspapers, only 5% of such articles were published on a front page; in regional newspapers, 32%; in local newspapers, 49%. While regional newspapers showed a slight tendency to favour polarized articles (Neg 33%, N/B 31%, Pos 36%), local newspapers showed a strong tendency to favour N/B and Pos articles (Neg 35%, N/B 47%, Pos 56%).

Regarding illustration with photographs (Figure 7b), newspapers in all markets gave similar prominence to news articles about the BCTF (national 39%, regional 48%, local 40%). National newspapers strongly favoured Neg and N/B articles (Neg 38%, N/B 43%, Pos 0%), while regional (Neg 59%, N/B 37%, Pos 68%) and local (Neg 39%, N/B 29%, Pos 59%) newspapers favoured articles that were polarized.

To summarize regarding these two indicators of editorial policy preference, national newspapers strongly favoured Neg and N/B articles over Pos articles, while regional newspapers slightly favoured Neg or Pos particles over N/B articles, and local newspapers strongly favoured Pos articles over Neg articles.

4.1.7 Reliability

The results of the intercoder reliability test indicate that the researcher's codings are sufficiently reliable for the purposes of the study, to compare tone across categories of articles. Pearson's r was calculated between the researcher's codings for tone and the means of the codings of the four volunteer student participants. The result ($r = 0.830$) indicated strong agreement between the researcher and the other coders.³⁸ In three studies comparing the tone³⁹ of articles about paired American politicians, Niven (2002) reported similar results, with intercoder reliability of 0.8 for paired presidents, 0.84 for paired state governors, and 0.9 for paired mayors (Niven, 2002, pp. 77, 84, and 87). However, Niven's reliability results were much more robust than the result for the current study, as they were calculated among twenty or more experienced coders, and not between one experienced coder (the researcher) and the mean of a group of inexperienced coders (the participants). For the current study, the reliability result of 0.830 may have been different with a different group of volunteer student participants.

³⁸ The researcher's codings were generally slightly lower (more negative) than the mean of the participants (see Figure 1), perhaps reflecting his personal experience as a teachers' union activist during the October 2005 strike.

³⁹ As shown in Chapter 2, Niven's variable of tone is a compound of the current study's variables of impacts and intentions.

4.1.8 Statistical Tests of Results

Pearson's Correlation

When Pearson's correlation is calculated for the basic results for article types in Figure 2a, the profiles for all editorials (62, 33, 5) and for all comments (55, 27, 18) show a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.969$), which is consistent with the editorial policy conjecture. However, the profiles for all editorials and for all news (23, 55, 22) show almost no correlation ($r = -0.012$), which is not consistent with the conjecture. The basic results for markets in Figure 2b show similar mixed support for the conjecture: The profiles for national markets (47, 49, 4) and for regional markets (51, 38, 11) show a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.935$), while the correlation between the profiles for national markets and for local markets (29, 43, 28) is much weaker ($r = 0.583$), and between the profiles for regional markets and for local markets is very weak ($r = 0.256$).

Chi-Square Tests

What is the probability that correlations (whether strong, weak, or close to zero) between profiles are due to chance, rather than to one or more underlying, non-random factors? As the profile for all articles (Figure 2a and Figure 2b) represents the entire population of articles, chi-square (X^2) tests were applied to the profiles of six samples from that population (Figure 2a and Figure 2b), to calculate probabilities (P) that correlations between the population profile and the sample profiles were due to chance. The results of the chi-square tests (Table 1) indicate that it is very unlikely that the correlations between profiles were due to chance.

Profile	Neg, N/B, Pos	X^2	P
All articles	39, 42, 19	0.00	0.0000
Editorials	62, 33, 5	28.51	<0.0001
Comments	55, 27, 18	11.97	0.0025
News	23, 55, 22	11.06	0.0040
National	47, 49, 4	14.65	0.0007
BC Regional	51, 38, 11	7.44	0.0242
BC Local	29, 43, 28	6.85	0.0325

Table 1. Chi-square tests for profiles from Figures 2a and 2b: The profile for all articles represents the population against which X^2 and P has been calculated for each of the six sample profiles. The numbers under "Neg, N/B, Pos" are the percentage shares of Neg, N/B, and Pos articles in each of the six samples.

4.2 Summary of Results

In Chapter 1, the study posed the research question: How consistent was the policy of CanWest newspaper articles with respect to the BCTF in October 2005, across different types of articles in different markets? Specifically,

1. *What were the differences between editorials, comments, and news?*

Profiles for comments resemble profiles for editorials, both skewed to the negative, while profiles for news are symmetrical, dominated by N/B articles.

2. *What were the differences between columns, opinion pieces, and letters?*

All profiles for comment subtypes in all markets were skewed to the negative, except for letters in local markets, which included many positive letters as well.

3. *What were the differences between national, regional, and local markets?*

National and regional editorials and comments were overwhelmingly negative, while local editorials and comments had large shares of N/B and Pos articles as well. Neg news

articles decreased and Pos news articles increased, from national to regional to local markets, while N/B articles dominated news coverage in all markets. Regional and local newspapers favoured Neg and Pos news over N/B news for illustration, while local newspapers favoured Pos and N/B news for front page placement, in contrast to regional newspapers, which accorded Neg, N/B, and Pos news articles similar probabilities of front page placement.

4. *What were the differences between regional newspapers?*

Editorials in all three newspapers were almost entirely Neg. Comments in *The Province* were overwhelmingly Neg; comments in the *Vancouver Sun* and *Times-Colonists* included moderate shares of N/B and Pos articles as well. Profiles for news coverage were similar for all three newspapers, with the *Times-Colonist* having the smallest share of Neg news articles and the largest share of N/B articles.

5. *What were the differences that appeared over time?*

National and regional newspapers maintained low shares of positive news articles, while shares of N/B and negative news articles varied in inverse proportion to each other. Local newspapers maintained low shares of negative news articles, while shares of N/B and positive news articles varied in inverse proportion to each other. Trends for all articles resembled trends for news articles, except for the added weight of generally negative editorial and comment articles.

In addition to these results, the study looked at results for two indicators of the prominence that editors may assign to articles: the probability that an article will be placed on the front page of a newspaper section, and the probability that an article will be illustrated with a photograph. These results show distinctly different patterns for

newspapers in national, regional, and local markets. National newspapers strongly favoured Neg and N/B articles over Pos articles, while regional newspapers slightly favoured Neg or Pos particles over N/B articles, and local newspapers strongly favoured Pos articles over Neg articles.

5 DISCUSSION

This study tested a commonly held assumption—the editorial policy conjecture—that newspaper owners and editors dominate columnists and reporters in shaping the news. The study posed a research question to test this conjecture: How consistent was CanWest’s editorial policy with respect to the BCTF across different article types in different markets over the course of October 2005? The results of the study can be summarized in two general observations: (1) While CanWest's editorials and comments tended to be negative about the BCTF, their news coverage tended to be neutral or balanced; (2) While CanWest's national and regional newspapers tended to be negative about the BCTF, their local newspapers tended to be neutral or balanced. These findings contradict the editorial policy conjecture.

5.1 Discussion of Results

Regarding the observed differences across article types, one could argue that editorials, comments, and news coverage have different functions in a coherent CanWest strategy to promote their editorial preferences in different types of articles. One could also argue that the observed differences in tone across markets reflect a coherent CanWest strategy to promote their editorial preferences to different audiences. Indeed, from the outset, this study assumed that CanWest’s editorial policy with respect to the BCTF was shown, not by its editorials alone, but by the entirety of what was written about the BCTF in CanWest newspapers. However, this study also assumed that the editorial policy conjecture—that newspaper owners and editors dominate columnists and reporters in shaping the news—meant that there would be no salient differences in policy across article types and markets. As Gutstein remarks, it was the very presence of

“balanced and fair observations” and “the many positive stories during the teachers’ dispute” that led him to reconsider the “assessment” that “the influence of owners and editors in shaping the news is considered to trump the influence of individual newswriters” (2005, p. 160).

What alternative to the editorial policy conjecture would be consistent with the findings of this study? Martin (2004) found that corporate media employ conventional narrative frames in covering labour issues and events, and that journalists' use of these frames was informal and intuitive—“largely an act of common sense”—consistent with Breed's (1955) observations on the transmission of newspaper policy from editors to journalists. “Unfortunately,” Martin noted, “common sense leads back to the familiar and traditional, and it often cuts off creative and imaginative news coverage” (pp. 7-8). The current study sees the editorial policy conjecture as another conventional narrative frame, one that limits our own understanding of the complex phenomena of newspaper policy by including only editors and journalists in the picture. Gans (1979) placed newspaper readers inside the frame, but only at the margins of the picture, keeping his focus on the power struggles between editors and journalists. Carney (2008) enlarged the frame to display contending forces bound together in a common enterprise: owners promoting ideology while seeking profits, journalists upholding professional values while seeking promotions, readers seeking news and entertainment along with validation of their personal views, and advertisers seeking prestige and paying customers. This picture suggests a richer understanding of newspaper policy, which could be called the *contending forces conjecture*.

The contending forces conjecture would grant power and influence to all parties in the process—owners, editors, journalists and their sources, writers of letters and opinion pieces, readers, advertisers, etc.—without insisting that one party dominates the views of others. The contending forces conjecture could explain the tendency of news articles to neutrality and balance—reflecting the norms of professional journalists—despite the ideological tendencies of editors and their preferred columnists. It could also explain the tendency of local newspapers to higher shares of news articles that were neutral or balanced, or even positive about the BCTF, compared to national and regional newspapers, if it could be shown that this tendency reflected the views of local readers, especially parents who supported the teachers of their children. In fact, research has shown that parents who hold negative views of public schools in general can be simultaneously positive about the public schools their own children attend (Bushaw & McNee, 2009), and a similar effect may be at work among journalists, along with other factors. Perhaps, as Gutstein (2005, October 31) suggests, "Many reporters are parents of school-aged kids and must sympathize with the teachers' cause" (p. 160); or, perhaps local CanWest reporters were merely following professional practice to record accurately the opinions of the people they interviewed, who happened to be local parents who were sympathetic to the striking teachers.

What do the findings of this study mean for journalists and their readers? To answer this, we should keep in mind the distinction this study makes between editorial policy as openly held preferences, and editorial bias as covert means of expressing those preferences. This distinction implies that readers should not complain when an editorial takes a clear stand on an issue or event, since taking clear stands is the function of

editorialists. Readers should not complain when a column displays provocative views, since it is the function of columnists to provoke. Readers *should* complain, however, when news reporters fail to provide the facts that readers need to make up their own minds on matters. If this study had found that the profile for CanWest news articles resembled the profile for their editorials, CanWest's readers would have had cause to complain of bias, and CanWest's journalists would have had cause for embarrassment. Instead, journalists and readers alike should be confident that CanWest, at least regarding the BCTF in October 2005, maintained the traditional distinction between editorials and news coverage.

Nevertheless, as was noted in Chapter 2, CanWest's many critics have two concerns that remain unchanged by evidence that CanWest's editorial policy does not taint its news coverage. The first concern is that CanWest's editorials and columns are staunchly anti-union, and the second is that CanWest represents too great a of media power.

As for the first concern, this study confirms the findings of other researchers that CanWest's owners and senior editors hold staunchly anti-union views; in other words, their findings regarding CanWest's anti-union *framings* are consistent with this study's findings regarding CanWest's *tone*, at least for editorials and comments. As for news coverage, this study indicates that CanWest's editorial tone does not determine the tone of its news coverage. However, this finding may do little to assuage the concerns of CanWest's critics. In his analysis of an extensive survey of the public image of the press in the United States, Gunther (1992) found that labor union membership was more likely to make a person distrustful of media coverage of labor unions than any other variable

tested.⁴⁰ In other words, American labor union members' perceptions of media coverage are grounded in their interests and experiences as union members. This is likely also the case for Canadian union members.

The second concern, about CanWest's market dominance, can be argued this way: Whatever the *tone* of CanWest's news coverage of unions, it is the *framing* of that news coverage that determines public perception of unions. Also, CanWest's overwhelmingly negative editorials and comments may have much more impact on the public perception of unions than their neutral or balanced news coverage. Furthermore, while it may be true that union members are self-interested in their distrust of media coverage of unions, it is not the *distrust* of trade unionists that should concern Canadians, but rather the *trust* of the general public in CanWest's portrayal of unions and union issues. Trade unionists and their supporters might not be so concerned about CanWest's views if alternative views were as readily available on Canadian news-stands, and radio and television stations.

These arguments may be strong enough to justify readers' demands on CanWest to provide better coverage of unions and their issues, but are they strong enough to justify government regulation of corporate media ownership? It is beyond the scope of this study to make recommendations for government policy, when many factors other than the tone of articles would have to be considered. However, the researcher will offer here some additional research-based context, to help readers answer this question themselves.

⁴⁰ "If a person identified with a particular group [including labor unions], he or she was significantly more likely to say the media gave unfavorable coverage to that group. In addition, group membership predicted credibility judgments more systematically than any of the other variables measured in this study [including perceived media attributes, demographic predictors, skepticism toward media, or skeptical disposition]" (Gunther, 1992, p. 156).

We need to step back from the narrow focus of this study, on one newspaper corporation's response to one strike in one calendar month, and look at the much broader issue of freedom of the press in liberal democratic society. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights expresses the ideal relationship between journalists and their readers in liberal democratic society: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers" (United Nations, 1948). However, in all countries, third-party interests—political, economic, religious, ideological, institutional, etc.—attempt to distort communications between journalists and readers. So, if readers expect fairness and accuracy in reporting, they must first demand that journalists have freedom to be fair and accurate.

At least two non-governmental organizations conduct annual assessments of freedom of the press around the world, using checklists to produce numerical data. For 2005, Freedom House (2006b) assessed 194 countries on a scale from 0 to 100 (best to worst), using 23 criteria for the legal, political, and economic environment in which journalists worked. Also for 2005, Reporters Without Borders (2006b, 2006c) assessed 168 countries on a scale that quantified violations of press freedom, using 50 criteria that "included every kind of violation directly affecting journalists (such as murders, imprisonment, physical attacks and threats) and news media (censorship, confiscation of issues, searches and harassment)." Figure 8 graphs the pairs of scores for 165 countries that appear on both lists. The two very different sets of criteria produced similar results (Pearson's $r = 0.829$), providing mutual support for their validity.

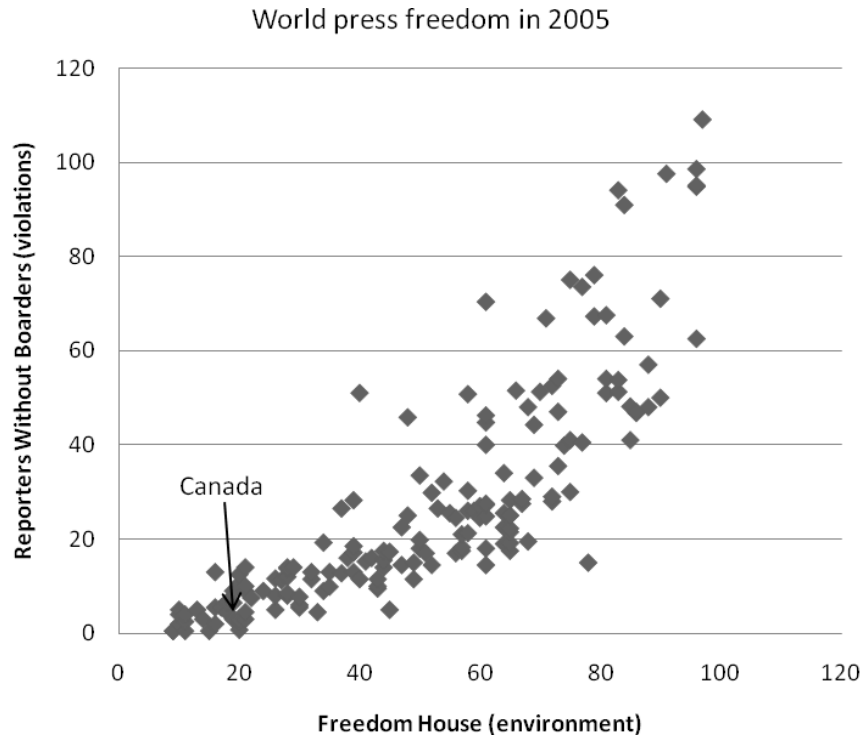


Figure 8. Canada's ranking in 2005 on two measures of press freedom.

For 2005, Freedom House assigned Canada a rating of 18—only 15 countries had a better rating—with the caution that press freedom was undermined by government bureaucracy and anti-terror laws, and that media pluralism was limited by "the extent of media concentration and the influence of powerful media conglomerates such as CanWest Global Communications" (Freedom House, 2006c). At the same time, Reporters Without Borders gave Canada a rating of 4.5—again, exceptionally good—"despite several court rulings that threatened the secrecy of journalistic sources, including one case where a journalist was declared in contempt of court" (Reporters Without Borders, 2006a). Both organizations were well aware of problems in Canada, including problems identified by CanWest's critics. However, in the often frightful international context—68 journalists and their assistants were killed worldwide in 2005 (Reporters Without Borders, 2006a)—

they found that Canada is a very free country for journalists, and only free journalists are able to govern themselves through their own professional standards, without fear of third-party interference. Given such high ratings for Canada's press freedom, how concerned should Canadians be that CanWest's editorial policy is anti-union?

Certainly, they should be concerned enough to demand of CanWest's editors that they include alternative views in columns and opinion pieces, and that they maintain the highest professional standards of objectivity of news coverage. They should be concerned enough to write their own letters for publication, and to support alternative media where they find them, especially on the Internet. However, if they were ever concerned enough to wish to persuade the government to interfere with press freedom in Canada, they need to remember that the cure could be worse than the disease.

CanWest's owners and editors should themselves be concerned that CanWest's editorials and comments are so very unbalanced about unions and union issues. This study has cited, in addition to CanWest's harshest critics, authors who were themselves journalists devoted to the flourishing of liberal democratic society (Carney, Kovach & Rosenstiel, Ward), who warn of the potential for partisan or ideological journalism to undermine readers' expectations of mainstream media: When readers no longer expect fair and accurate news and commentary in mainstream media, they search for overtly partisan and ideological alternatives that more closely reflects their own views. Not only do mainstream media lose their customers, but democratic discourse suffers from the lack of reasoned, balanced opinions.

5.2 Suggestions for Further Research

Other researchers have analyzed CanWest newspapers in detail for content related to the framing of discourse on unions, without distinguishing between editorials and news coverage. This study did not try to characterize CanWest's policy on the BCTF beyond the relatively simple matter of tone, but it did make a clear distinction between editorials and news coverage. Further research could try to combine these results, to see whether there is any correlation between the framing of discourse on the BCTF, and tone of the discourse, as defined in this study. In other words, given the difference in tone about the BCTF, between editorials and news coverage, was there also a difference in frames?

Further research could apply the numerical and graphical methods developed for this study to other topics in media studies. This study developed a two-question rubric for coding newspaper articles for *tone* with respect to a moral actor, that is, an actor with *intentions* whose actions had *impacts* on others. This placed the articles on a 5-point scale, which was simplified to a 3-point scale while keeping crucial distinctions in tone: negative, neutral-or-balanced, and positive. Visual *profiles* of groups of articles—simple 3-bar graphs—enabled comparisons of groups of articles for their general tendencies in tone with respect to the moral actor.

Further research could apply the methods of this study to the study's corpus of October 2005 CanWest articles, while identifying the BCTF's opponents in the dispute—the provincial government, its ministries and ministers, and the Premier—to determine

whether CanWest news coverage truly favoured the government during the dispute.⁴¹ Further research could also explore the apparent differences in news coverage between national, regional, and local markets, to see whether this phenomenon is consistent across other issues and events, and to consider what this implies about the relationships between local reporters and the communities they cover.

Finally, although this study was based on a single month of journalistic activity by a single news corporation, it has broader implications for journalism research. This study showed that, during a heated labour dispute that dominated the news throughout BC, when CanWest's editors and full-time columnists were conspicuously negative about the BCTF, CanWest's news reporters produced a torrent of news coverage that was predominantly neutral or balanced. This finding, if confirmed by similar studies of other newspapers, and other issues and events, should be cause for comfort for news readers, and pride for reporters. Further research could reveal the source of this journalistic integrity, whether it lies in journalism schools, in professional standards, or in the transmission of newsroom tradition. Journalistic independence is essential to liberal democratic society, and must be nourished and protected wherever we find it.

⁴¹ The researcher will provide a copy of the project database to interested readers who contact him. Due to copyright restrictions, the database copy cannot include the full-text of the articles, but it will include hypertext links to the same online Proquest articles accessed by the researcher.

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APPENDIX A – TABLES

Profile	Neg, N/B, Pos	X^2	P
All articles	39, 42, 19	0.00	0.0000
Editorials	62, 33, 5	28.51	<0.0001
Comments	55, 27, 18	11.97	0.0025
News	23, 55, 22	11.06	0.0040
National	47, 49, 4	14.65	0.0007
BC Regional	51, 38, 11	7.44	0.0242
BC Local	29, 43, 28	6.85	0.0325

Table 1. Chi-square tests for profiles from Figure 2a and Figure 2b: The profile for all articles represents the population against which X^2 and P has been calculated for each of the six sample profiles. The numbers under "Neg, N/B, Pos" are the percentage shares of Neg, N/B, and Pos articles in each of the six samples.

Impacts Pearson's <i>r</i> = 0.769		Coder A	Coder B	Coder C	Coder D	Mean	Researcher
	Item 1	1	2	1	1	1.25	1
	Item 2	3	2	3	2	2.50	2
	Item 3	3	3	3	3	3.00	2
	Item 4	2	1	2	1	1.50	1
	Item 5	2	2	3	1	2.00	2
	Item 6	2	3	3	1	2.25	2
	Item 7	1	1	2	1	1.25	1
	Item 8	3	1	2	3	2.25	1
	Item 9	2	3	2	3	2.50	2
	Item 10	2	2	2	1	1.75	1
Intentions Pearson's <i>r</i> = 0.804		Coder A	Coder B	Coder C	Coder D	Mean	Researcher
	Item 1	3	2	2	3	2.50	2
	Item 2	3	1	3	1	2.00	1
	Item 3	2	3	2	3	2.50	2
	Item 4	3	1	2	1	1.75	1
	Item 5	1	2	3	3	2.25	2
	Item 6	3	3	3	3	3.00	3
	Item 7	2	1	2	2	1.75	1
	Item 8	3	2	2	3	2.50	2
	Item 9	3	3	2	3	2.75	2
	Item 10	2	1	2	2	1.75	2
Tone Pearson's <i>r</i> = 0.830		Coder A	Coder B	Coder C	Coder D	Mean	Researcher
	Item 1	4	4	3	4	3.75	3
	Item 2	6	3	6	3	4.50	3
	Item 3	5	6	5	6	5.50	4
	Item 4	5	2	4	2	3.25	2
	Item 5	3	4	6	4	4.25	4
	Item 6	5	6	6	4	5.25	5
	Item 7	3	2	4	3	3.00	2
	Item 8	6	3	4	6	4.75	3
	Item 9	5	6	4	6	5.25	4
	Item 10	4	3	4	3	3.50	3

Table 2: Comparisons of codings by the researcher and four student volunteers.

Results of searches	Markets	Articles Found	Duplicates & Off Topic	Articles Included
Calgary Herald	National	10	1	9
Edmonton Journal	National	14	3	11
Leader-Post	National	18	2	16
National Post	National	23	9	14
Ottawa Citizen	National	9	3	6
Star-Phoenix	National	9	1	8
The Gazette	National	17	10	7
Windsor Star	National	11	3	8
National markets		111	32	79
The Province	Regional	75	6	69
Times-Colonist	Regional	115	4	111
Vancouver Sun	Regional	118	9	109
BC regional markets		308	19	289
Abbotsford Times	Local	17	1	16
Burnaby Now	Local	25	1	24
Chilliwack Times	Local	20	1	19
Coquitlam Now	Local	23	0	23
Delta Optimist	Local	17	0	17
Langley Advance	Local	17	0	17
Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows Times	Local	21	0	21
The Record	Local	18	0	18
North Shore News	Local	21	2	19
Richmond News	Local	19	0	19
Surrey Now	Local	21	0	21
Vancouver Courier	Local	13	1	12
Alberni Valley Times	Local	33	0	33
Campbell River Courier-Islander	Local	7	0	7
Cowichan Valley Citizen	Local	17	0	17
Harbour City Star	Local	29	0	29
Nanaimo Daily News	Local	64	1	63
BC local markets		382	7	375
All markets		801	58	743

Table 3. Results of searches: Proquest was searched on "bctf" OR "teachers federation" OR "teachers union". Four local newspapers were not available through Proquest: *Alberni Valley Pennyworth*, *Comox Valley Echo*, *Oceanside Star* (Parksville), and *Tofino-Ucluelet Westerly*.

Results of Coding							
All Articles	Neg	N/B	Pos	Neg	N/B	Pos	
All markets	0.39	0.42	0.19	291	311	141	743
National	0.47	0.49	0.04	37	39	3	79
BC regional	0.51	0.38	0.11	147	109	33	289
BC local	0.29	0.43	0.28	107	163	105	375
Editorials	Neg	N/B	Pos	Neg	N/B	Pos	Total
All markets	0.62	0.33	0.05	38	20	3	61
National	1.00	0.00	0.00	6	0	0	6
BC regional	0.94	0.06	0.00	17	1	0	18
BC local	0.41	0.51	0.08	15	19	3	37
Columns	Neg	N/B	Pos	Neg	N/B	Pos	Total
All markets	0.66	0.33	0.01	57	29	1	87
National	0.50	0.50	0.00	2	2	0	4
BC regional	0.69	0.31	0.00	35	16	0	51
BC local	0.63	0.34	0.03	20	11	1	32
Opinions	Neg	N/B	Pos	Neg	N/B	Pos	Total
All markets	0.63	0.19	0.19	10	3	3	16
National	0.50	0.00	0.50	1	0	1	2
BC regional	0.80	0.20	0.00	4	1	0	5
BC local	0.56	0.22	0.22	5	2	2	9
Letters	Neg	N/B	Pos	Neg	N/B	Pos	Total
All markets	0.50	0.24	0.25	97	47	49	193
National	1.00	0.00	0.00	1	0	0	1
BC regional	0.68	0.17	0.14	52	13	11	76
BC local	0.38	0.29	0.33	44	34	38	116
News	Neg	N/B	Pos	Neg	N/B	Pos	Total
All markets	0.23	0.55	0.22	89	212	85	386
National	0.41	0.56	0.03	27	37	2	66
BC regional	0.28	0.56	0.16	39	78	22	139
BC local	0.13	0.54	0.34	23	97	61	181
Comments	Neg	N/B	Pos	Neg	N/B	Pos	Total
All markets	0.55	0.27	0.18	164	79	53	296
National	0.57	0.29	0.14	4	2	1	7
BC regional	0.69	0.23	0.08	91	30	11	132
BC local	0.44	0.30	0.26	69	47	41	157

Table 4. Results of coding all articles.

Editorials		VN	SN	NB	SP	VP	
Calgary Herald	National	1					1
Edmonton Journal	National						0
Leader-Post	National	1					1
National Post	National	2					2
Ottawa Citizen	National	1					1
Star-Phoenix	National						0
The Gazette	National		1				1
Windsor Star	National						0
National markets		5	1	0	0	0	6
The Province	Regional	5					5
Times-Colonist	Regional		6	1			7
Vancouver Sun	Regional	5	1				6
BC regional markets		10	7	1	0	0	18
Abbotsford Times	Local	2		1			3
Burnaby Now	Local			3			3
Chilliwack Times	Local	2		1			3
Coquitlam Now	Local		1	1	1		3
Delta Optimist	Local						
Langley Advance	Local			2			2
Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows Times	Local		2	2			4
The Record	Local			3			3
North Shore News	Local		1				1
Richmond News	Local		1	3			4
Surrey Now	Local			3			3
Vancouver Courier	Local						
Alberni Valley Times	Local		1				1
Campbell River Courier-Islander	Local						
Cowichan Valley Citizen	Local		1		1		2
Harbour City Star	Local						
Naniamo Daily News	Local	3	1		1		5
BC local markets		7	8	19	3	0	37
All markets		22	16	20	3	0	61

Table 5. Coding of editorials.

Columns		VN	SN	NB	SP	VP	
Calgary Herald	National						0
Edmonton Journal	National						0
Leader-Post	National			2			2
National Post	National	1	1				2
Ottawa Citizen	National						0
Star-Phoenix	National						0
The Gazette	National						0
Windsor Star	National						0
National markets		1	1	2	0	0	4
The Province	Regional	8	1	1			10
Times-Colonist	Regional	8	3	9			20
Vancouver Sun	Regional	10	5	6			21
BC regional markets		26	9	16	0	0	51
Abbotsford Times	Local	1		1			2
Burnaby Now	Local						
Chilliwack Times	Local			1			1
Coquitlam Now	Local	2	1	1			4
Delta Optimist	Local						
Langley Advance	Local						
Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows Times	Local	1		1			2
The Record	Local	1					1
North Shore News	Local	5		1			6
Richmond News	Local	2					2
Surrey Now	Local	1		1			2
Vancouver Courier	Local						
Alberni Valley Times	Local						
Campbell River Courier-Islander	Local	1			1		2
Cowichan Valley Citizen	Local						
Harbour City Star	Local	2		3			5
Naniamo Daily News	Local	2	1	2			5
BC local markets		18	2	11	1	0	32
All markets		45	12	29	1	0	87

Table 6. Coding of columns.

Opinion pieces		VN	SN	NB	SP	VP	
Calgary Herald	National						0
Edmonton Journal	National						0
Leader-Post	National					1	1
National Post	National	1					1
Ottawa Citizen	National						0
Star-Phoenix	National						0
The Gazette	National						0
Windsor Star	National						0
National markets		1	0	0	0	1	2
The Province	Regional						0
Times-Colonist	Regional	1	1				2
Vancouver Sun	Regional	2		1			3
BC regional markets		3	1	1	0	0	5
Abbotsford Times	Local						0
Burnaby Now	Local			1			1
Chilliwack Times	Local		1				1
Coquitlam Now	Local						0
Delta Optimist	Local						0
Langley Advance	Local						0
Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows Times	Local						0
The Record	Local						0
North Shore News	Local						0
Richmond News	Local	1					1
Surrey Now	Local						0
Vancouver Courier	Local	1					1
Alberni Valley Times	Local				1		1
Campbell River Courier-Islander	Local						0
Cowichan Valley Citizen	Local	1				1	2
Harbour City Star	Local						0
Naniamo Daily News	Local	1		1			2
BC local markets		4	1	2	1	1	9
All markets		8	2	3	1	2	16

Table 7. Coding of opinion pieces.

Letters		VN	SN	NB	SP	VP	
Calgary Herald	National						0
Edmonton Journal	National						0
Leader-Post	National						0
National Post	National	1					1
Ottawa Citizen	National						0
Star-Phoenix	National						0
The Gazette	National						0
Windsor Star	National						0
National markets		1	0	0	0	0	1
The Province	Regional	12	5		2	1	20
Times-Colonist	Regional	11	3	8	1	4	27
Vancouver Sun	Regional	11	10	5	2	1	29
BC regional markets		34	18	13	5	6	76
Abbotsford Times	Local	2		1	3		6
Burnaby Now	Local	1	1	3	1	3	9
Chilliwack Times	Local	3	1		1	4	9
Coquitlam Now *	Local	2	1	4			7
Delta Optimist	Local	1		1	2	2	6
Langley Advance	Local		2	3	2		7
Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows Times	Local	4	1	2		1	8
The Record	Local	1		2			3
North Shore News	Local	1	1	1	1	1	5
Richmond News	Local	3		2			5
Surrey Now	Local	2		2	1	2	7
Vancouver Courier	Local	1	1	2	2		6
Alberni Valley Times	Local			2	2	2	6
Campbell River Courier-Islander	Local	1		1	1		3
Cowichan Valley Citizen	Local	1		2			3
Harbour City Star	Local	6	1	2		3	12
Naniamo Daily News	Local	6		4	2	2	14
BC local markets		35	9	34	18	20	116
All markets		70	27	47	23	26	193

Table 8. Coding of letters: * *Coquitlam Now* published two collections of short letters; this study coded each collection as one article.

News articles		VN	SN	NB	SP	VP	
Calgary Herald	National	2	1	5			8
Edmonton Journal	National	2	2	7			11
Leader-Post	National	3	2	5	2		12
National Post	National	2	1	5			8
Ottawa Citizen	National	1		4			5
Star-Phoenix	National	3	2	3			8
The Gazette	National		3	3			6
Windsor Star	National		3	5			8
National markets		13	14	37	2	0	66
The Province	Regional	6	5	20	3		34
Times-Colonist	Regional	5	8	34	6	2	55
Vancouver Sun	Regional	8	7	24	6	5	50
BC regional markets		19	20	78	15	7	139
Abbotsford Times	Local			5			5
Burnaby Now	Local	1		5	2	3	11
Chilliwack Times	Local		1	2		2	5
Coquitlam Now	Local		1	5	1	2	9
Delta Optimist	Local			7	4		11
Langley Advance	Local			3	4	1	8
Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows Times	Local	1		4	1	1	7
The Record	Local	1		7	2	1	11
North Shore News	Local	1	2	2	1	1	7
Richmond News	Local		1	3	1	2	7
Surrey Now	Local			6		3	9
Vancouver Courier	Local			3	1	1	5
Alberni Valley Times	Local	2	2	14	3	4	25
Campbell River Courier-Islander	Local			1	1		2
Cowichan Valley Citizen	Local			4	2	4	10
Harbour City Star	Local		4	7		1	12
Naniamo Daily News	Local	3	3	19	5	7	37
BC local markets		9	14	97	28	33	181
All markets		41	48	212	45	40	386

Table 9. Coding of news articles.

APPENDIX B – FIGURES

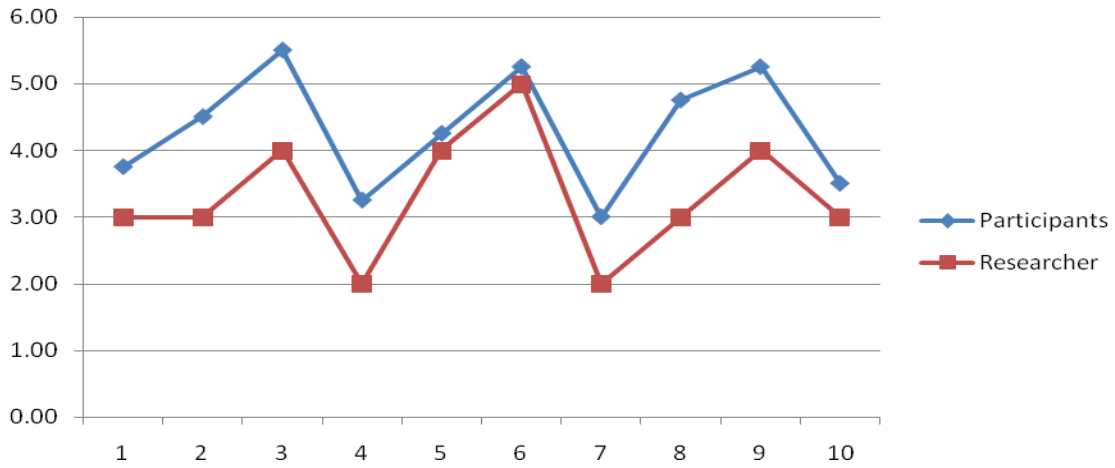


Figure 1: Comparison of codings for tone (Pearson's $r = 0.830$).

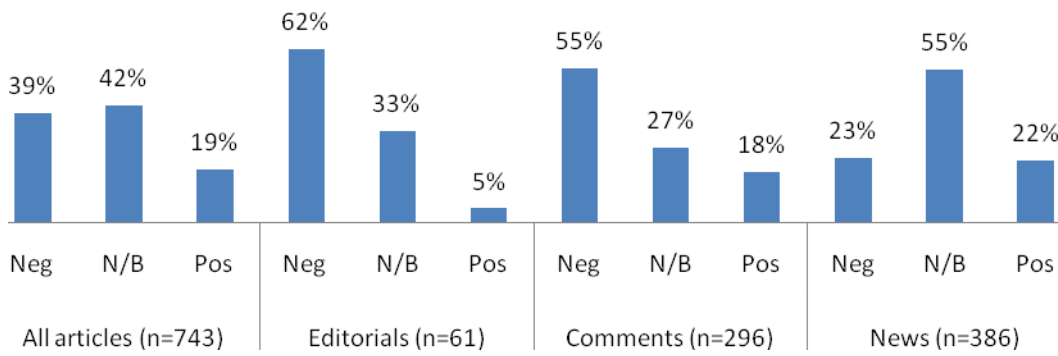


Figure 2a: All articles, sorted by article types

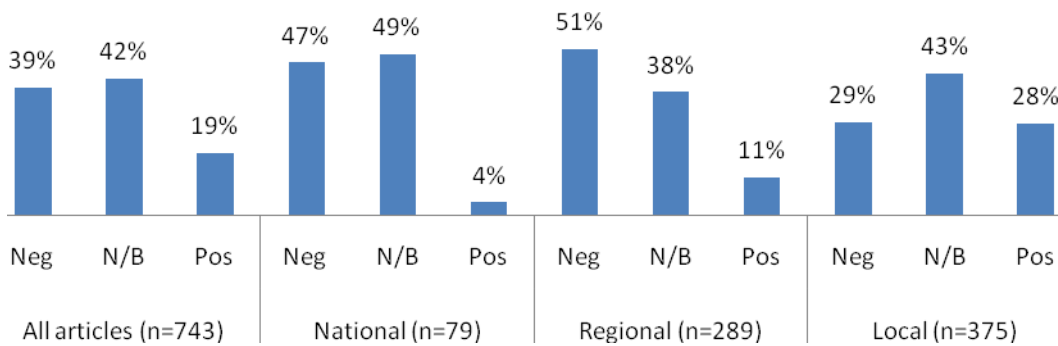


Figure 2b: All articles, sorted by markets

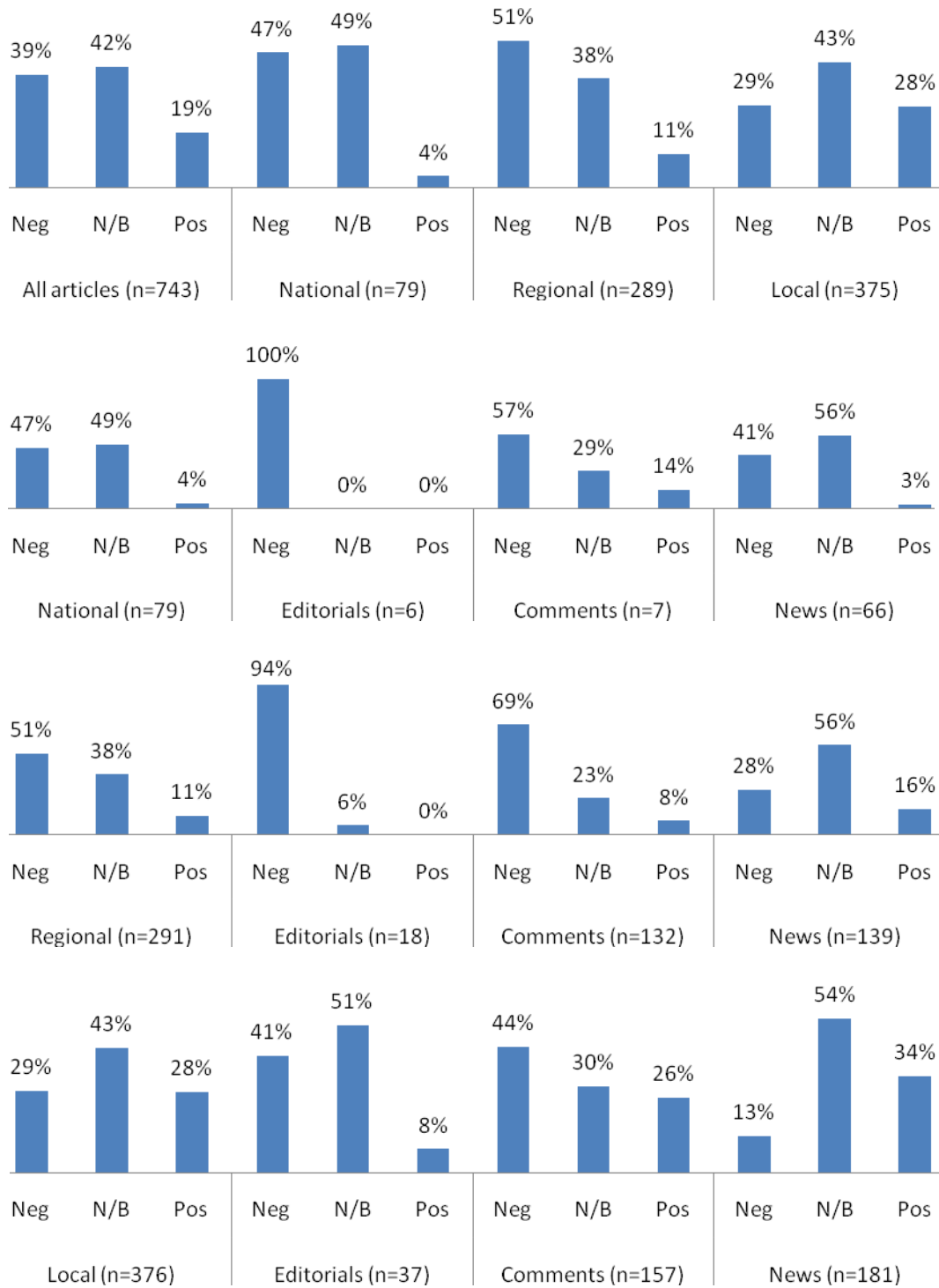


Figure 3. All articles, sorted by types and by markets

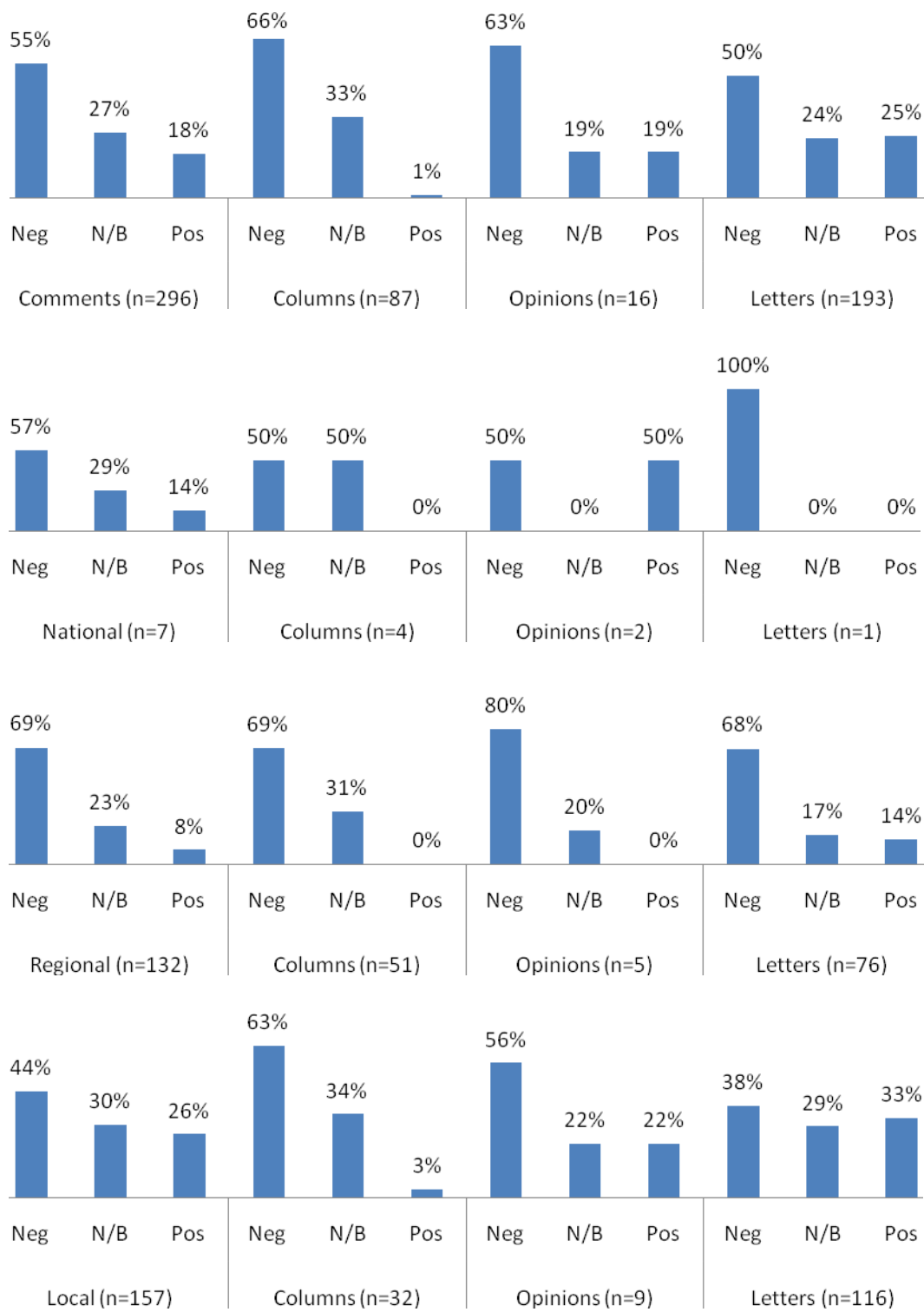


Figure 4. Comments, sorted by subtypes and by markets

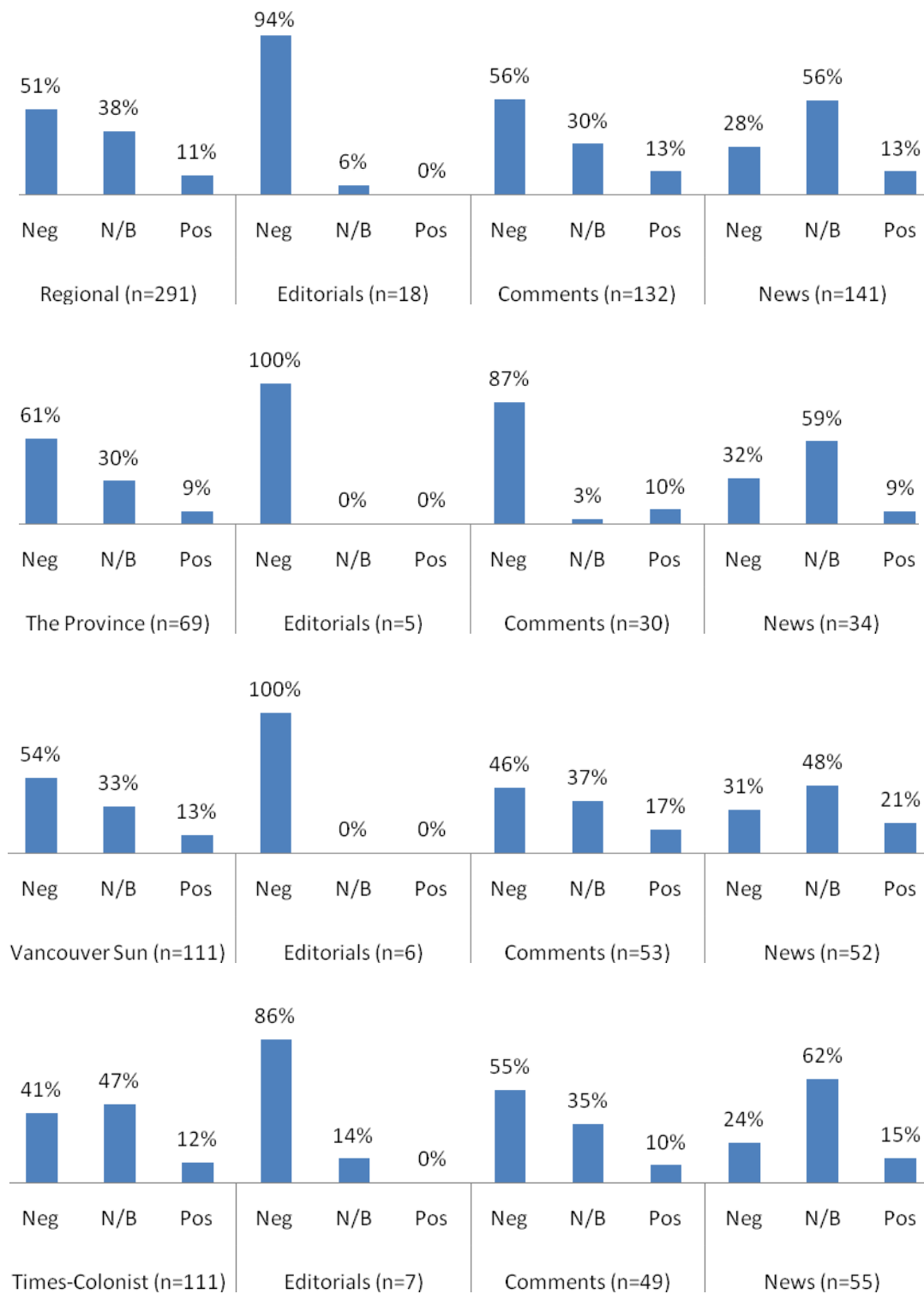


Figure 5. Results for regional newspapers

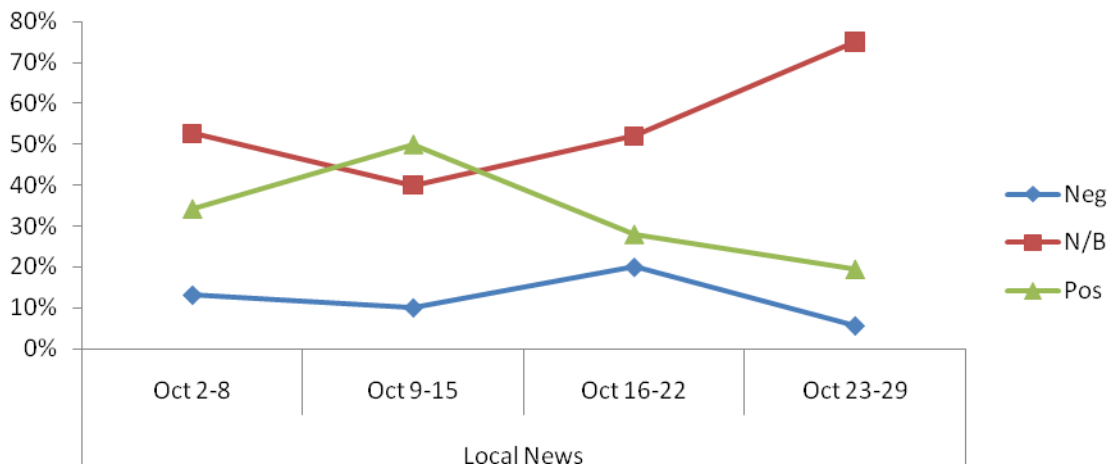
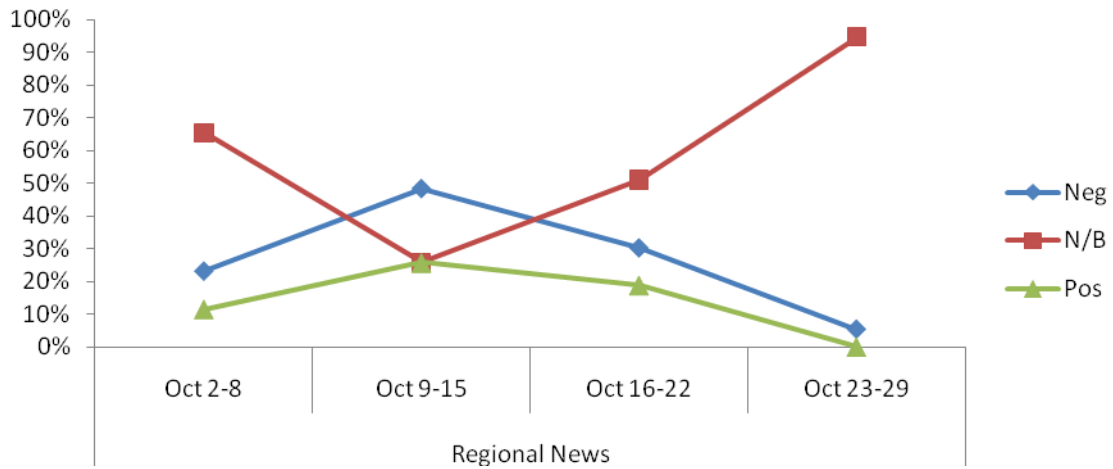
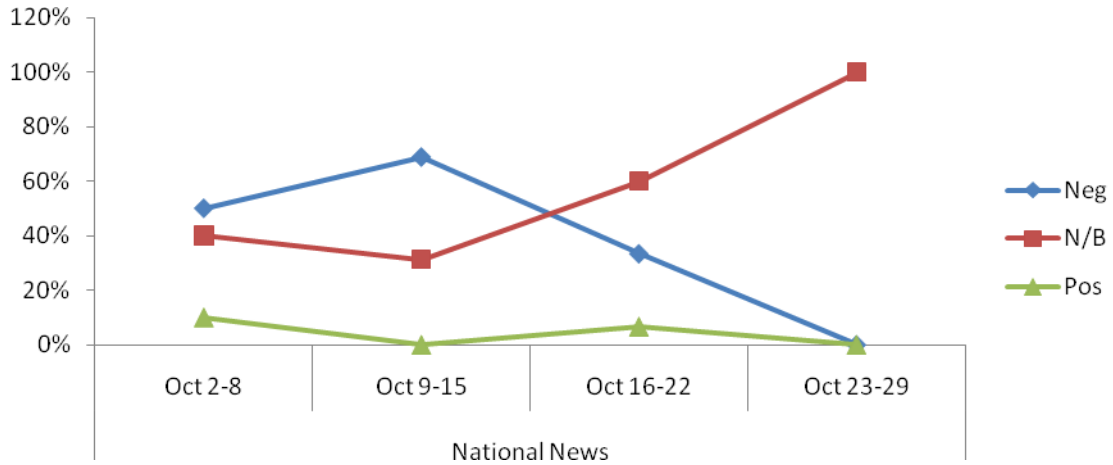


Figure 6a: Trends in tone over time of news articles about the BCTF.

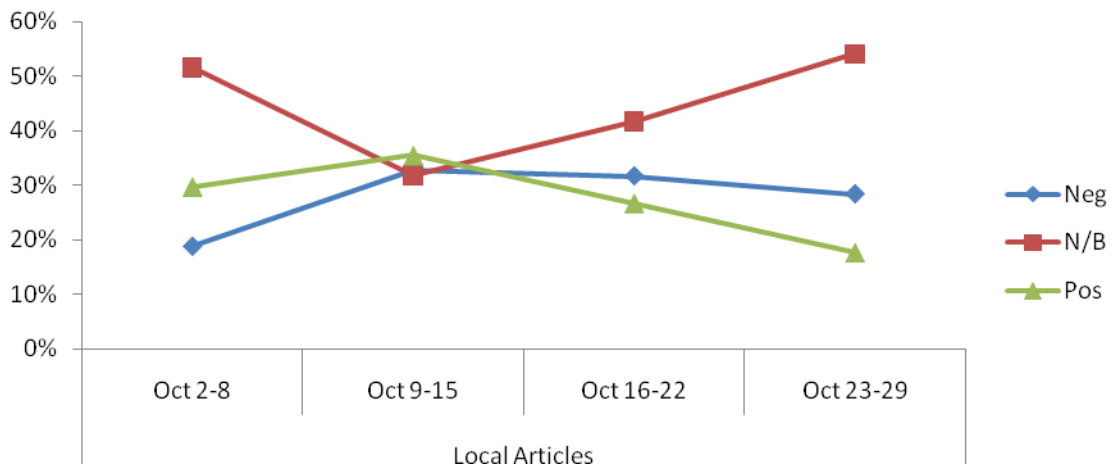
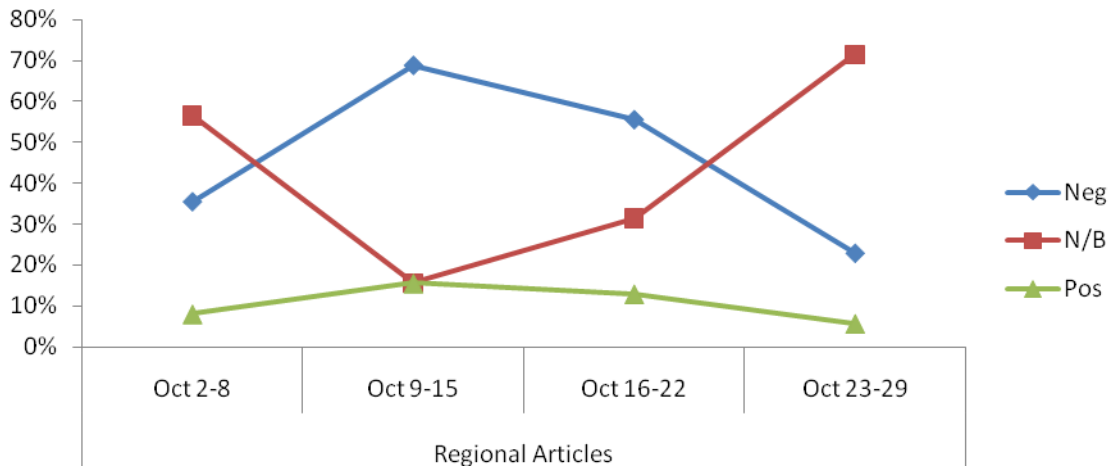
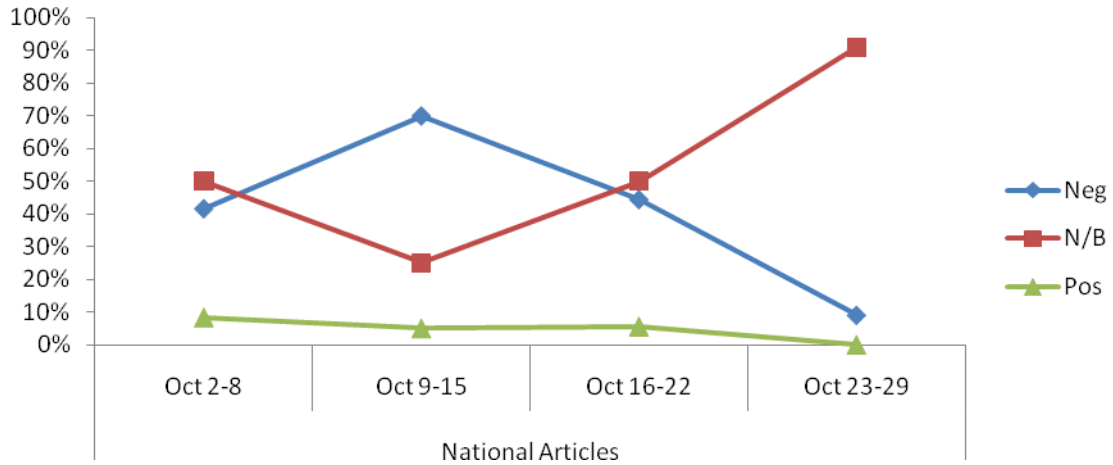


Figure 6b: Trends in tone over time of all articles about the BCTF.

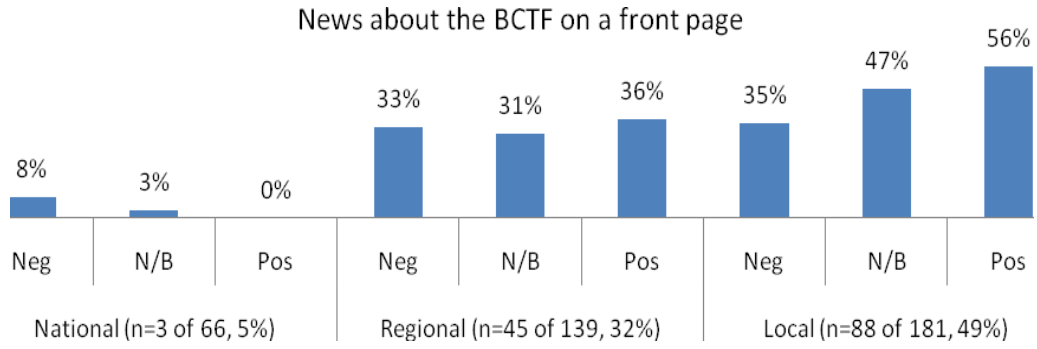


Figure 7a: Probability that a news article on the BCTF was published on the front page of a newspaper section, given its tone, sorted by markets.

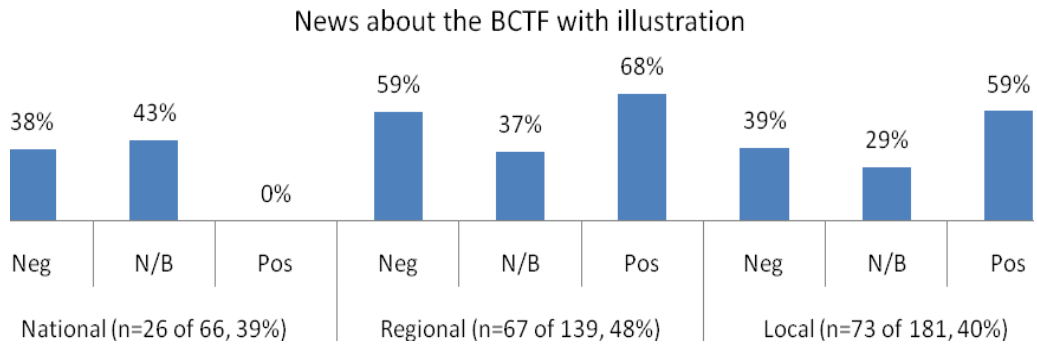


Figure 7b: Probability that a news article on the BCTF was illustrated with a photograph, given its tone, sorted by markets.

APPENDIX C – ARTICLES USED FOR RELIABILITY TEST

1. Teachers' job action disrupting some community programs

Decisions will be made by local teachers' union association, so closures will vary

Picketing teachers will surround community centres attached to schools today, causing the cancellation of all programs at those sites at least for today.

The affected community centres in Vancouver are Britannia, Strathcona, Thunderbird and Champlain, each of which shares a site with a school.

"We are picketing the whole site," Lynne Sinclair, director of field services for the B.C. Teachers' Federation said Thursday.

"Our members routinely take students to those facilities. They are a common site with teachers and that is why we are picketing there."

Picketing decisions are being made by the local teachers' union associations, so things may vary from one municipality to another.

In Surrey, for example, where the school board rents space in buildings with other commercial operations for programs such as its learning centres, the union has told the board that pickets will go up but will not disrupt other businesses in the buildings.

The decision to picket shared sites in Vancouver means that all facilities on the shared sites, including libraries, swimming pools and fitness centres, will not be staffed today since the employees are Canadian Union of Public Employees members, who have been asked by their regional office not to cross any picket lines.

"We are completely supporting this [BCTF job] action because of the government's imposed contract," said Joe Badali of the CUPE regional office.

The BCTF's Sinclair said a past Labour Relations Board ruling that separated the schools from the community centres during labour disputes is immaterial.

"In our view, this is different. We are having a political protest."

CUPE members will receive strike pay for as long as the pickets remain, said Louise Leclair of the CUPE regional office.

Sinclair said that if school board employees are

scheduled to work in a community centre on the weekend—for example, giving adult literacy classes—that centre would be picketed for the weekend. If not, there will be no picket line for that period.

Enzo Guerriero, executive director of Britannia Community Centre said Thursday the situation is very fluid and teachers may set up their picket lines in such a way that the child-care centre, senior centre and information centre will be able to remain open today.

However, he said, his staff is preparing to shut down the entire site at least for today.

"We won't know for sure until 7:30 tomorrow morning," he said Thursday afternoon.

He said the Britannia library has VSB employees working upstairs in the adult learning centre on the weekend, so it will most likely be picketed then.

Night school and continuing education classes normally held in schools are also expected to be cancelled today.

Yvonne Eamor, communications director for the Vancouver school board, said the teachers' union has advised it that continuing education classes held in schools Saturday will be picketed. Those programs will be cancelled, said Eamor.

But Eamor couldn't say if programs next week will be cancelled.

"We are planning one day at a time," she said noting all discussions Thursday focused on actions for today. "There has been no planning for next week."

Les King, facilities director with the Vancouver school board, said he has notified all community organizations that rent space in schools for such things as daycares, language classes and special events, that they must make other arrangements if there are picket lines around the schools.

The Vancouver Sun could not confirm Thursday how theatres and auditoriums attached to school property will be affected.

2. Artfully crafted proposal prodded both sides to agree to the deal

The B.C. Liberals spent much of the week being cute about their decision to engage Vince Ready to facilitate an end to the teacher dispute.

The veteran mediator was merely continuing his earlier work as inquiry commissioner on teacher bargaining, they maintained.

To admit otherwise would be to concede they were brokering with a union in the midst of an illegal strike.

But the truth of the matter was disclosed in Ready's recommendations for settling the dispute, released late Thursday.

"On Oct. 17"—Monday, the day of the big protest rally at the legislature—"my mandate was expanded to include facilitating a return to work," Ready wrote in the opening paragraph an artfully crafted proposal.

He then proceeded to demonstrate why he is known for finding middle ground where lesser mortals—cabinet ministers, union leaders, political pundits—see nothing but vast and unreconcilable differences.

The BCTF wanted a pay increase in the current contract year. The Liberals were determined to maintain a freeze on public sector wages.

Ready seized on the fact that the wage guidelines expire with the government budget year on March 31, 2006, while the end of the contract year for teachers is not until June 30, 2006.

Into that three-month gap, he slotted \$40 million to equalize longstanding wage disparities among school districts and a \$5-million boost for teachers on call.

"The effective date will be after the end of the current fiscal year and before the expiry of the present collective agreement," Ready noted, lest anyone missed the significance of the timing.

He further urged government to make a one-time (i.e. non-contractual) payment of \$40 million into the teachers' long-term disability fund.

Thus the art of the deal: Teachers could say they gained \$85 million while government could maintain, no less accurately, that the freeze was inviolate.

Teachers may find it galling that these improvements will be more than funded by the savings from their strike.

But even in legal strikes it happens that wages lost on the picket line are not fully made up in eventual settlement.

Here, at least, the money will be retained in the education system, not returned to the treasury for the Liberals to count as part of their budget surplus. Plus the next opportunity to seek a better deal is not far off, since there's less than a year to run in the contract.

Ready faced more of a struggle to find a solution on class sizes, even though government and union both professed to want to address that particular concern.

Teachers wanted specifics, incorporated into the School Act. Government balked, lacking reliable data from school districts and not wanting to commit to numerical targets before knowing the full extent of the problem.

Ready's compromise was two-fold. First, \$20 million in interim funding, "entirely targeted to issues of class size and special needs students."

Second, he prodded government to consult with teachers and produce a more permanent fix in the long run.

"The government has indicated its concern to have an effective mechanism for enforcement of the class size limitations set out in the School Act," Ready observed. "I will recommend an appropriate mechanism for government's consideration."

The BCTF spent much of Friday trying to expand the Ready report on that point. The union wanted a stronger commitment in writing, not trusting the government on the follow-through.

But the ultimate guarantor wasn't the Liberals. It was Ready himself, who'll remain on the job as inquiry commissioner well into next year.

He was not likely to tolerate any evasions of responsibility, not after the premier and the labour minister both endorsed his recommendations "unconditionally."

He also saw fit to warn the union that it was time to end the protest strike.

"My recommendations are conditional on an expeditious return to work by the teachers," Ready wrote.

If that wasn't sufficiently persuasive, there was the companion message from Supreme Court Justice Brenda Brown.

She fined the union \$500,000, saying the amount was predicated on the assumption that teachers would soon be returning to work.

If that turns out not to be the case, the clear implication was that starting next week, the fines could be "very significantly larger."

Even with those directional hints, some teachers may find it hard to stand down a protest strike that has engendered considerable public support and set the government back on its heels.

Others, knowing the fickleness of public opinion, will accept the Ready recommendation as the best

3. Strike holds valuable life lessons for little ones

What to say to a four-year-old who just wants to know who will care for him?

My four-year-old son crossed his first picket line Friday. He wasn't alone—he had his faithful bear-bear, a long stuffed snake, and a child-care worker to escort him. The only thing he didn't have was mom or dad.

Because his preschool/day-care is located on Vancouver School Board property, parents had been politely asked not to cross the picket line. And so we stood with picketing teachers behind the linked chain at the foot of the driveway that separates the outside world from school property, and handed him over.

To prepare him for this, the night before I had carefully explained what a picket line was, given him a little backgrounder on the history of collective bargaining, and reminded him that I was out on a picket line pushing him in a stroller not long ago.

I reminisced about a raucous teachers' strike in Ontario I had witnessed as a kid, where the education minister's effigy was first hung from a tree and then burned on the front lawn of the legislature.

I let him know that in the olden days young boys like him were often sent to the children's workhouses where they were expected to work long hours in brutal conditions and had little hope of living to adulthood, so it was a good thing that we have come so far since the Industrial Revolution.

Before I could sing a refrain from *The Internationale*, he interrupted me. "But Mommy, who is going to wipe my bum?"

The burning question. That one last thing we can't convince him he's old enough to do for himself, but one of the many things that are part of the daily drop-off ritual.

Let me explain.

You see, we are only just getting used to the new preschool. And there is a routine. We go in together. I help him find his cubby, put on his "inside shoes" (he doesn't like wearing "inside shoes"), take him to the

bathroom to help him wash his hands really well, with soap, because the school is a nut-free zone and we must be careful not to transfer any possible peanut residues from home. Finally, most mornings, he procrastinates another few minutes by shutting himself in a bathroom cubicle, after which I am called in to perform the procedure mentioned above.

Then there is more hand-washing, followed by the long, tragic walk to the good-bye window where I wipe his tear-streaked face and leave him with a kiss through the grille and a promise I'm rarely able to fulfill: to pick him up early.

But Wednesday, while teachers were taking their vote to walk out, was a breakthrough day for the boy. When I picked him up, he announced, with face shining: "I didn't cry, not once, not the whole day."

Not only was he getting used to his new preschool, he told me, he actually liked it.

But now, who was going to ... ?

Friday, on the long walk up the driveway to the chain link barrier, where a dozen cheerful teachers wearing picket signs were gathered, Alexander kept his eyes glued firmly on the ground. He clutched his bear-bear and dragged his snake.

Then one of the picketers asked him about the snake. Another admired his light-up shoes. They thanked me for respecting their picket line. And when I handed him over to his escort, he didn't cry. Not one tear.

I like to think he understood a little about the principles we had discussed, though more likely he was just grateful I wasn't sending him to the children's workhouse.

The walk without mom was sombre, but his father and I have high hopes for this educational experience. If this helps him learn to finally do that last little thing for himself, I guess we'll have the BCTF to thank.

4. A failure to negotiate

One adult solution to the teacher bargaining process has been ignored by both sides; it's time to give it a chance

As teacher bargaining in British Columbia moves deeper into its traditional OK Corral metaphor, let's ask why, when at least one adult solution has been proposed, both sides are still in the street trying to look like the toughest kid in town.

The five-phase teacher bargaining process proposed in late 2004 by labour ministry commissioner Don Wright should be given a chance to work. What's old is new again because referring bargaining deadlocks to an arbitrator operating within fixed timelines is the way teacher bargaining was conducted in the 1970s and early 1980s before full unionization of the province's 42,000 teachers.

The advantage of the arbitration "winner take all" system was that it tended to introduce common sense into the public education bargaining process.

Extreme bargaining positions were more likely to lose out completely given the likelihood that the arbitrator, who had no vested interest in who won, would choose the more reasonable proposal in its totality rather than splitting the proposals down the middle or even seeking common ground.

In his original report to the minister of labour, Wright delivered an intellectual, but at the same time humanely shaped analysis of the most troubling dilemma that has impeded the productive governance and progress of public education—how to proceed from a situation where everybody concerned thinks they are right and yet, at the same time, nobody close to the problem knew what to do next.

Wright had issued a timely admonition to all interested parties to teacher bargaining:

"A system that is too tilted in favour of one side or the other, or ignores the interests of the broader public, will lose legitimacy and will cease being an institution that society supports."

After his appointment as commissioner in 2004, Wright initially proposed the time-tested management maxim "responsibility, accountability and authority should reside in the same place." Put another way, the best decisions are almost always made closest to the consequences of those decisions.

But the 132-page report delivered to the legislature, and thus far ignored completely by both the government and the B.C. Teachers' Federation, does not go so far as to advocate a return to local

bargaining—mainly because of the history of failed attempts to find a system that worked.

Rightly or wrongly, after unionization, trustees had found themselves in the late 1980s and early 1990s trying to bargain locally against a well-marshalled BCTF provincial strategy and were picked off, district by district, as a result.

The local pickup team usually lost out to the provincial all-stars. Setting aside what had been local bargaining, the then government of the day, in 1994, introduced the Public Sector Employers' Association. BCPSEA was, with every best intention at the time, created to level the playing field for what had been this losing game (for trustees, at least) of district by district local negotiation.

Then, in 1998, in the kind of about-face found only in military retreats and provincial politics, the same government outflanked its own newly instituted BCPSEA and entered into direct and spectacularly unsuccessful bargaining with the BCTF.

It discovered, firsthand and apparently for the first time, why nobody else had been able to negotiate, in the normal sense of the word, with the highly organized and disciplined BCTF.

Things have not improved since then and, as Wright explained in last year's initial report: "No party seems to believe that the existing structure, unchanged, can lead to successful bargaining in the future.

"The past 16 years of teacher collective bargaining have not resulted in a happy legacy," Wright said with delicate understatement, quoting one experienced participant in several rounds of bargaining as saying "nobody does it as badly as we do."

With the current teacher contract having run out in June 2004, Wright has recommended an alternative dispute mechanism to striking that possibly would work for the majority of teachers and trustees who see holding children as hostages to fortune distasteful.

Wright's suggestions will likely strike fear—on either side of the bargaining table—into the hearts of ideologues to whom a day without conflict is a day without sunshine.

But to a system fatigued and demoralized by work to rule, walkouts, strikes and school closures, it may look like the road to an internal peace and a restoration of public confidence long overdue.

5. Liberals apply the legal hammer

Even NDP leader Carole James acknowledges the rule of law prevails

VICTORIA—Teachers call it dropping "the legislative hammer." They're right about that.

The provincial Liberal government's decision to use its majority to impose a contract on 42,000 teachers is as raw an exhibition of political power as you can see in a Canadian legislature. Teachers will have zero increase in wages, zero chance to negotiate issues like class size, and zero chance of staging legal strikes until next June.

B.C. Teachers' Federation president Jinny Sims has called it bullying, an attack on workers' rights, and a fundamental erosion of democratic tradition.

But like it or not, there's also one inescapable fact: The Liberals are enshrining the teachers' contract in law, which means if they go out on strike today, the BCTF can expect a future of fines and court orders demanding its members return to teaching, which is deemed an essential service under B.C. law.

The New Democratic Party raged against the government's tactic, dragging debate well into Thursday night. But the teachers' staunchest political ally also acknowledged that in the end it must bow to the rule of law, even one it doesn't like.

"We are all lawmakers," Labour Minister Michael de Jong told NDP leader Carole James, sensing the party's dilemma.

"The leadership that the leader of the Opposition has to show is to make it clear to the people who she counts on for political support that she does not support what would be unlawful and illegal activity. This is her opportunity to do so."

James didn't answer. But in the hall a few minutes later she acknowledged that as a legislator she must ultimately support the supremacy of Parliament.

"Do I think people should follow the law? Yes," she said after reporters grilled her on whether she supports teachers striking illegally.

She didn't answer specifically about the job action called for today, but she left no doubt where she stands if the strike is deemed illegal: "Do I think the public and others, and teachers included, should follow the law? Yes."

It's a political balancing act the NDP does not much like. But this is no clear-cut victory for the Liberals, either.

The fight over the teachers' contract has given the NDP a chance to show its power in the legislature, where its 33 MLAs now have enough muscle to drag on debate and force attention on issues. The Liberals still have a majority but what Thursday's legislative debate has shown is that everything they do is once again being amplified and scrutinized by a vigorous Opposition.

"The government in the short run may have the winning hand," said University of Victoria political scientist Norman Ruff. "They can use their majority to push through laws, they can invoke closure.

"But if you look down the line, the context is now quite different. With the larger NDP [caucus] there's now a fuller debate. I think the teachers, with the NDP's help, have made headway in making people think about the policy issues in detail—the situation in the classroom, class-size, the students with special needs, the closing of libraries."

Another new wrinkle for the Liberal government, which spent its first mandate in the role of deficit busters, is that it is now also awash in cash: a surplus of \$1.3 billion or more this coming year. The NDP is bringing that up repeatedly, suggesting there is money to meet at least some of the teachers' demands.

"A government with a fiscal surplus, one foreseeably stretching into the next few years, will have a harder time saying the cupboard is bare," said Michael Prince, a political scientist at the University of Victoria.

With 90 per cent of public service unions coming up for re-negotiation in the months ahead, Prince also said "the government will need to set out a framework soon, to balance the expectations. If it doesn't it will be a big mistake."

The NDP also sees at least one political advantage in the crisis that is unfolding. "I think it's a terrible signal to the rest of the public service that is coming up for bargaining," said James.

"Sadly, they're setting a terrible pattern for a lot of negotiations about to come."

6. Public and private unions in Kootenays back teachers with demonstrations

Mills, mines and municipal operations shut down

CRANBROOK—Thousands of workers in southeast B.C. walked off the job Wednesday in support of striking school teachers.

Rallies in Trail, Nelson and Cranbrook each attracted between 500 to 1,000 demonstrators who turned out for speeches and songs.

Public sector workers closed municipal operations and teachers set up picket lines at mills and mines. Private sector unions at a number of Kootenay locations honoured the pickets, bringing operations to a halt.

Bob Matters, president of Local 1-450 of the steelworkers union in Cranbrook, said his union members refused to cross picket lines at Tembec operations in Elco and Canal Flats, the Canfor mill in Radium, and the Slocan Forest Products Springer Creek Mill in Slocan. He said about 800 workers were affected.

"The fight is about the right to free collective bargaining," Matters said. "That was taken away by this government, and it's not just a single issue for the teachers, it's an issue that deals with all workers in the province, and it's as simple as that."

Municipalities were left without workers as the Canadian Union of Public Employees withdrew services. Police and firefighters remained on the job.

Municipal operations in Cranbrook, Nelson and Trail were closed, garbage collection was suspended, and civic recreation facilities were shut.

Cranbrook Mayor Ross Priest said the one-day closure was a relatively minor disruption, and added he expected all services to resume today.

Students at the College of The Rockies in Cranbrook were without classes for the day as faculty and support staff walked off the job and set up information picket lines at the entrances to the campus.

It was the third consecutive day of labour demonstrations around the province to protest Bill 12, the legislation that extended the teachers' old contract

until next June.

Wayne Malone, a national representative of the Canadian Union of Public Employees for the East Kootenay, said workers were also off the job at BC Hydro and natural-gas utility Terasen.

"We've been overwhelmed by the support we've had from our members," he said. "We're getting our message across to the government, we hope, and to the citizens of British Columbia."

Cranbrook middle-school teacher Grant Giles, who said he has 13 special-needs children in a class of 26 students, said the provincial government does not recognize the problems in B.C.'s schools.

"There is no trust in this government at this point and [Premier Gordon Campbell] has to show some way that we can actually have some trust," he said.

About 500 teachers, union members and supporters stood in the rain at a noon-hour rally to hear a series of speakers lambaste the Liberal government for its refusal to allow free collective bargaining for teachers.

Cindy Oliver, president of the Federation of Post-Secondary Educators of B.C., placed the blame for the situation squarely on Campbell.

"If he had shown any leadership, this dispute would never have gotten to this point," she said.

Angela Shira, secretary-treasurer of the B.C. Federation of Labour, told the rally the provincial government has not learned that people will not give up their rights without a fight.

"There are thousands of you all over the Kootenays delivering the message to your elected representatives to tell them to get to the Campbell government and say, 'Sit down and negotiate a collective agreement with the teachers in this province'," she said.

"It isn't just a fight with the teachers. Each and every one of you know that with that piece of legislation, you could be next.

"That's why you're standing out here in solidarity with the teachers to say 'Enough is enough.' "

7. Teachers, government must find a way to halt the current madness

British Columbia's 600,000 public school students are being trampled underfoot as the provincial government and the B.C. Teachers' Federation continue their battle for the moral high ground.

After nearly a week without school, both sides are rapidly losing credibility in their claims to be acting in the best interest of students.

BCTF president Jinny Sims says teachers are willing to stay out on their illegal strike "as long as it takes" to achieve a fair agreement. She has climbed out on a tall ledge with no exit strategy and has taken B.C.'s 40,000 teachers with her.

Labour Minister Mike de Jong says the dispute is out of his hands as long as the teachers continue breaking the law. He echoes the view of Premier Gordon Campbell, who also clings to the position that since his government imposed a contract on teachers there is nothing to negotiate.

Both the government and the BCTF are wrong.

The government is responsible for delivering public education. As long as the schools are closed, the government is failing to deliver that vital service. It cannot duck that responsibility by simply blaming the teachers.

Nor does the fact that the strike is illegal obviate the need for de Jong and his cabinet colleagues to start talking to teachers about how to get them back into the classroom.

Sims, in defending the BCTF, cites the doctrine of civil disobedience, which, in the tradition of Gandhi and the American civil rights movement, argues that people have the moral right and sometimes the moral duty to defy unjust laws.

That is her choice, and today the BCTF may learn just how expensive a choice that can be as the B.C. Supreme Court rules on what penalty to impose after

finding the union in contempt of court.

No doubt it will be severe, as it should be. The rule of law must be protected from those who would willfully put themselves above it.

But as we saw with the illegal strike by the Hospital Employees Union, the legal process is separate from the negotiations that will eventually have to be held between teachers and the government to get children back into their classrooms.

Education Minister Shirley Bond seems to believe the way to do that is to get enough teachers to defy their union. By the time that happens, and there is no reason to believe it will, enormous damage will already have been inflicted on students and our school system.

The courts will eventually wear down the BCTF. The union has the resources, however, to endure several million dollars in fines and, from her rhetoric, it sounds like Sims may be prepared to go to jail. In the meantime, however, thousands of children will have suffered unrecoverable losses.

Many students will do just fine, even if the strike were to go on for weeks. Others, including those who were already struggling with school or who can't count on much help at home, might never catch up this year.

Every day counts. High school students on the semester system who face provincial exams are losing the equivalent of two days for every day schools remain closed.

This madness has to end.

The government must start talking to teachers. It won't be easy. They are continents apart, hostile and suspicious of each other's motives. But without dialogue, the gulf between them will never be bridged.

8. Interview with Shirley Bond.

'We do a huge disservice if anyone talks about classrooms, schools or the system being in crisis.'

SHIRLEY BOND, MINISTER OF EDUCATION

Vancouver Sun: Teachers say their classrooms are so large, so complex they can no longer do their jobs. What do you say to worried parents?

Shirley Bond: We are interested and always have been in having a discussion about class size and composition. I want to have a discussion about why some classes are large . . . but we we also have to point out that there are also smaller classes. We are in the process of setting up a learning round table that would have as its focus those very issues.

The first thing we're going to do is have class size reported to us, class by class, school by school. That hasn't been done before. I expect to receive that information . . . by the end of this month.

Class size is important to this government. In fact, it was important enough that we took it away from the bargaining table and put caps and averages in legislation. I want to know if that legislation is working.

Vancouver Sun: Are schools in crisis?

Shirley Bond: No. There are undoubtedly some challenges facing teachers in classrooms today just as there have been across the decades. [But] we do a huge disservice if anyone talks about classrooms, schools or the system being in crisis. We have more students graduating than ever before at 79 per cent. We have aboriginal students graduating at record levels. And we have [more] ESL students graduating—they've improved by about seven per cent in terms of their completion rates. Despite challenges in some classrooms, our students are still amongst the top in the world.

Vancouver Sun: Are teachers overwhelmed by the large number of unsupported special needs students in their classes?

Shirley Bond: I don't think you can necessarily generalize by the situation in some classes in the province. Where there are significant challenges in classrooms, we need to have that discussion. We need to even look at specific classrooms, which I'm more than happy to do. When I hear someone tell me there's 48 students in a class, I want to know why and where and what decision- making has been involved in placing 48 students.

Vancouver Sun: Should any teacher be expected to teach a class of 35-plus students including a half dozen or more special-needs children?

Shirley Bond: That's a situation that I want to discuss at the learning round table. I can assure you that when you add \$150 million to a system with 30,000 less students in it there have to be circumstances that have seen significant improvement and in fact there are.

Vancouver Sun: Have you considered asking for an independent assessment of teachers' concerns?

Shirley Bond: Our goal right now is to sit down at the table with the people who make the system work. And that is not simply the BCTF. I intend for the learning round table to be permanent. It isn't to address circumstances that come out of this situation. It's actually to have a place for on-going discussion that will shape government policy.

There have been numerous venues for the BCTF to discuss class size, composition and learning conditions. They've chosen not to. They've really had only one goal in mind and that was to make sure that those were returned to the bargaining table.

Vancouver Sun: How can teachers be assured their concerns will be taken seriously?

Shirley Bond: We are trying to find a way that is meaningful and significant. Will I say today that I'm going to promise that every recommendation that's brought there will be agreed to by government? Of course not, no one can say that.

Vancouver Sun: How do you justify spending millions on laptop computers and wireless schools when some students don't have desks or textbooks?

Shirley Bond: It's not a matter of either/or in the system. It's trying to find the balance that would bring all the students in this province the best opportunity they can possibly get. Where there are specific issues in terms of desks and textbooks, we want to hear about that. We have the highest level of funding ever in this province and that's with 30,000 fewer students. So one of the things we have to talk about is how are those resources being allocated, how are districts making the decisions about how they serve their students.

Vancouver Sun: Why do some students not have desks?

Shirley Bond: That's a question that I would love to know the answer to because this is a government that actually has put record resources in place.

So again some of the discussion that needs to take place at the learning round table is actually for us to hear exactly where classrooms are having situations where students don't have desks.

9. A short summary of bargaining points

Teachers had three goals when they voted a month ago in favour of taking job action:

- A 15-per-cent wage increase over three years.
- A return of full bargaining rights, which were curtailed in 2001 when the Liberals passed a law declaring education an essential service.
- The restoration of learning conditions that were in place in 2002; this included enshrining in the contract class-size limits, restrictions on the number of special-needs students in any one class and a requirement that schools have a certain number of specialty teachers, such as librarians and ESL teachers.

The government countered with the introduction of Bill 12, an imposed contract that offered a zero wage increase.

- Labour Minister Mike de Jong further agreed to appoint a commission to create a new bargaining system between teachers and their employer, the B.C. Public School Employers Association.

- Education Minister Shirley Bond announced the creation of an "education round table," where issues such as class size and special needs education would be discussed.

Mediator Vince Ready recommends:

- No wage increase, but a one-time injection of \$40 million towards harmonizing teacher wage grids throughout the province, as well as a further \$40 million to go into the BCTF long-term disability fund. The government would also commit to pay \$5.2 million towards a uniform daily base rate for teachers on call.

- Creation of an education round table with a strong representation of teachers in order to identify and rectify problems in the school system.

- Amending the School Act to include class-size limitations in Grades 4 to 12, and the addition of \$20 million (from \$150 million to \$170 million) in targeted funding to address issues of class size and special needs students.

10. There is no common ground on the schoolyard

Class-size weighting formula was not mentioned in this dispute

On Thursday, I had the pleasure of talking to a Vancouver school board administrator who tried to give me a math lesson. Lynn Green is the VSB's administrator for learning and development, and she was explaining how Vancouver schools determine class size.

I had assumed they determine class size by having a teacher walk around the room, pointing at each child's head and counting one, two, three, four, etc.

But that is so Old Math, so Old School.

In Vancouver, students aren't just bodies, they are mathematical equivalences. They are weighted. For example, if a student is categorized as physically dependent with multiple needs—say, if he or she is in a wheelchair and has little or no motor control—that student, said Green, is assigned a mathematical equivalence of 5.0.

That is, in a classroom composed of 20 "normal" students, Green said, the addition of that one special needs student would bring the official class size up to 26 students, or to state it in mathematical terms, 20 plus one plus five.

Deaf and blind students are 5.0 as well. Autistic students have a weighted factor of 3.0, as do those with moderate to profound disabilities. And ESL

students and first nations students have weighted factors of 0.2, which, as I understand it, means five ESL students would equal six bodies in an official class size count.

I came to this information sort of third-hand: I phoned the VSB about its weighting system after I was told about it by the Sun's education reporter Janet Steffenhagen, who said she had heard it from someone who had heard a caller on The Bill Good Show mention it.

The point is, I hadn't heard any of it from the BCTF or the VSB or the government, anywhere, and you would think that, given the central position the issue of class size has taken in this month's schoolyard rumble, and the importance that even one or two more students in a classroom makes, someone might mention it in the interest of factual information.

Instead, the weighting system—as is usual with anything educational—left me more confused than ever.

Was it unique to Vancouver, or did the province's other school systems use it? (Green didn't know.) Was weighting an accurate reflection of class size, or a weighted student's disruption of class routine? Do weighted students of the same category pose the same

challenges to a teacher, or are some easier to include in the classroom routine than others? Does the BCTF use weighting in making its case for lower class sizes? When the president of the Vancouver Secondary Teachers Association stated in 2002 that there were almost 28,000 situations in Vancouver where kids were in classes of more than 30 students, were those weighted figures?

I don't know, and in the two-week-long debate over, ahem, the crisis in our schools, "I don't know" could serve as a motto. In the talk shows, on TV, in the newspapers, in the utterings of the BCTF and the government both, I have heard and seen a lot of singular, anecdotal evidence, and a lot of emotion, but not many facts.

What, for example, would be the exact cost of restoring the number of teachers to 2002 levels, as the BCTF has asked? How much would another 2,600 teachers cost the system? No pedagogical philosophizing, please, just give the taxpayers the facts.

Or this: If, as the Liberals have claimed, the education budget is currently the highest in the province's history at \$5.07 billion, and funding is now at a record level of \$7,097 per student, and education funding has increased by 10.5 per cent since 2000, and there are 22,000 fewer students in the public system than there were five years ago, then where in hell is all that money going? Why are parents continually being asked to chip in for school supplies—as my wife and I have had to do throughout the education of our three children? Why are teachers being forced to do so? Why are some schools awash in laptops and some schools haven't enough textbooks? Why is the educational topography in this province so irregular?

Then there is this abiding conundrum:

If the B.C. education system has been gutted and ours is a system in disarray, why have B.C. students in national and international skill assessments consistently placed at or near the top? According to the last test done by the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2003, B.C. students outperformed their counterparts in almost every province and in all but a handful of the 41 countries sampled. B.C. was fifth in math, third in reading and sixth in science. Does the BCTF wish to take sole responsibility for this as testimony to the dedication of its members? Or would the Liberals like to take out another full-page ad in *The Sun* as proof of the grand job they've been doing? Or would both sides care to recognize that below the din of rhetoric, many things are quietly working well and deserve reciprocal reward?

I am not holding my breath.

Between the government's stupid legislative bullying and the BCTF's obsessive culture of self-pity, there is no common ground on the schoolyard. Parents and taxpayers, meanwhile, must choose sides mostly on the basis of vague loyalties and political bias, because hard and fast facts, stripped off their political rhetoric, are hard to come by. We don't know what we don't know.

There is some evidence the province is inching toward a more precise accounting of the school system, with the announcement last month that B.C. school boards will be required to report all class sizes, and that results will be posted on line for each school. This will better help parents make informed decisions about class size for themselves.

But one question: Will those numbers be weighted or not? Just so we're clear.

APPENDIX D – CODING FORM FOR RELIABILITY TEST

1. Teachers' job action disrupting some community programs

IMPACTS: Regarding the impacts of BCTF actions on others, this article is ... (check one)

Negative Neutral, or Balanced Positive

INTENTIONS: Regarding the intentions of the BCTF, this article is ... (check one)

Negative Neutral, or Balanced Positive

2. Artfully crafted proposal prodded both sides to agree to the deal

IMPACTS: Regarding the impacts of BCTF actions on others, this article is ... (check one)

Negative Neutral, or Balanced Positive

INTENTIONS: Regarding the intentions of the BCTF, this article is ... (check one)

Negative Neutral, or Balanced Positive

3. Strike holds valuable life lessons for little ones

IMPACTS: Regarding the impacts of BCTF actions on others, this article is ... (check one)

Negative Neutral, or Balanced Positive

INTENTIONS: Regarding the intentions of the BCTF, this article is ... (check one)

Negative Neutral, or Balanced Positive

4. A failure to negotiate

IMPACTS: Regarding the impacts of BCTF actions on others, this article is ... (check one)

Negative Neutral, or Balanced Positive

INTENTIONS: Regarding the intentions of the BCTF, this article is ... (check one)

Negative Neutral, or Balanced Positive

5. Liberals apply the legal hammer

IMPACTS: Regarding the impacts of BCTF actions on others, this article is ... (check one)

Negative Neutral, or Balanced Positive

INTENTIONS: Regarding the intentions of the BCTF, this article is ... (check one)

Negative Neutral, or Balanced Positive

6. Public and private unions in Kootenays back teachers with demonstrations

IMPACTS: Regarding the impacts of BCTF actions on others, this article is ... (check one)

Negative Neutral, or Balanced Positive

INTENTIONS: Regarding the intentions of the BCTF, this article is ... (check one)

Negative Neutral, or Balanced Positive

7. Teachers, government must find a way to halt the current madness

IMPACTS: Regarding the impacts of BCTF actions on others, this article is ... (check one)

Negative Neutral, or Balanced Positive

INTENTIONS: Regarding the intentions of the BCTF, this article is ... (check one)

Negative Neutral, or Balanced Positive

8. Interview with Shirley Bond.

IMPACTS: Regarding the impacts of BCTF actions on others, this article is ... (check one)

Negative Neutral, or Balanced Positive

INTENTIONS: Regarding the intentions of the BCTF, this article is ... (check one)

Negative Neutral, or Balanced Positive

9. A short summary of bargaining points

IMPACTS: Regarding the impacts of BCTF actions on others, this article is ... (check one)

Negative Neutral, or Balanced Positive

INTENTIONS: Regarding the intentions of the BCTF, this article is ... (check one)

Negative Neutral, or Balanced Positive

10. There is no common ground on the schoolyard

IMPACTS: Regarding the impacts of BCTF actions on others, this article is ... (check one)

Negative Neutral, or Balanced Positive

INTENTIONS: Regarding the intentions of the BCTF, this article is ... (check one)

Negative Neutral, or Balanced Positive
