Civil Society, Good Governance and the News Media:
A case study of civil society inclusion in Winnipeg Free Press coverage of Lake Winnipeg nutrient loading

by

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A thesis
presented to the University of Waterloo
in fulfilment of the
thesis requirement for the degree of
Master of Environmental Studies
in
Environment and Resource Studies

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2010
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I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

     Governance and participatory democracy theory suggest that strong policy can stem from the inclusion of all societal voices in discussion of options, and that the public must have a strong base of information in order to participate fully in democracy. The news media can be an important vehicle for these voices and a central source of information. However, academic literature has recorded that "elite" sources, such as government, dominate news coverage to the disadvantage of "non-elite" sources, such as civil society groups and citizens, a situation that results in imbalanced information in the news. This thesis examines patterns of civil society inclusion in *Winnipeg Free Press* coverage of Lake Winnipeg water quality, and discusses the implications of findings for good governance.

     Three methods of inquiry are used: 1) a literature review, 2) a quantitative content analysis of newspaper articles published in the *Winnipeg Free Press* from August 1991 through December 2008, and 3) interviews with civil society members with an interest in Lake Winnipeg water quality. Content analysis findings indicate that civil society sources generally received less coverage than "elite" sources, were used less frequently, were given lower prominence within articles, had fewer chances to "define" coverage and were less often used in "hard" news compared to opinion sections.

     Interview findings challenge the dominant view within media literature that journalists are fully responsible for "elite" source dominance due to journalist bias in source selection, the "beat system" of journalism that focuses on governmental institutions, decisions made by editors and corporate or political preferences of news entities. While journalism practices are undoubtedly a factor, this study finds that there are also shortcomings within civil society organizations and the framework within which they operate that limit their engagement with the media. Four key factors are identified. Registered charities are often hesitant to speak with the media due to real and perceived legal restraints on their communications activities under Canada's *Income Tax Act*. Many organizations are apprehensive about voicing concerns in the media for fear of losing funding. Few organizations have communications staff, or even staff members trained in media outreach, resulting in a passive approach to communications. And few organizations have the capacity to deal with media requests for information within journalism deadlines. In addition, the interview data indicate that those organizations actively pursuing media coverage are focusing attention on smaller newspapers, alternative media and self-

published pieces, which suggests that the mainstream news media are perhaps of less importance to such organizations than in the past. Alternatively, it is possible that organizations are finding access to the mainstream media effectively cut off.

Finally, recommendations are made to civil society organizations on how they can increase their prominence in the news and conquer their reluctance to deal with the media, and to the media on how to improve attention to civil society voices. For the latter, ideas are drawn from public journalism, a journalism movement which emphasizes citizens as sources.

Finally, those who know me well will not be surprised to see me also thank my cats. Animals are surely one of the best therapies for stress.

Dedication

Dedicated to Lake Winnipeg and its ecosystem that supports such a wealth of life, from the petit Lake Winnipeg Physa snail to the massive and mysterious Lake Sturgeon (both endangered).

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Fixing Lake Winnipeg: a collective responsibility, from public deliberation to policy implementation?

In February of 2007, the Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board, the entity charged by the Manitoba government with providing recommendations to reduce eutrophication of the lake, published a document entitled *Reducing Nutrient Loading to Lake Winnipeg and its Watershed: Our Collective Responsibility and Commitment to Action*. This title is reflective of the nature of the nutrient loading problem: virtually every citizen in the watershed contributes to nutrient loading in the watershed in some way. Therefore, it is a collective problem that calls for collective action.

Participatory democracy theory embraces such inclusive initiatives, and would have the public engaged throughout the policy planning process. It also encourages participation through other public venues, such as local news outlets, where debates over policy solutions can be played out. Through such public debate on issues, citizens can keep abreast of developments and be equipped with the necessary information to join the debate if they so wish.

Potentially at least, the news media are vital vehicles for public learning, and can have a significant effect on participatory democracy and good governance. This thesis explores whether or not newspaper articles in the largest daily newspaper in Manitoba, the *Winnipeg Free Press*, act upon this "collective responsibility" by consulting a wide variety of sources, particularly civil society organizations and individuals with interest and knowledge on the topic.

1.2 Research questions

There are two main research questions that this thesis seeks to answer:

1. How has civil society been included in newspaper coverage of Lake Winnipeg nutrient pollution?; and

2. How might civil society usage patterns in this coverage positively or negatively affect good governance?

The more specific sub-questions to be explored are as follows:

1. How are civil society organizations and individuals used as news sources compared to other types of sources?

2. To what types of newspaper pieces ("hard news", Op-Eds, letters to editor) does civil society have the most access?

3. How important are the news media, particularly the *Winnipeg Free Press*, to civil society organizations' communication goals?

4. Do civil society members feel that they are able to communicate effectively with the public via the news media, particularly the *Winnipeg Free Press*?

5. What restraints, both self-imposed and external, are there are on civil society inclusion in news coverage of Lake Winnipeg nutrient pollution?

1.3 Rationale

Nutrient loading, specifically of phosphorus and nitrogen, is having predominantly negative effects on the health of Lake Winnipeg. The summer and fall of 2006 saw the most widespread toxic algae blooms that the southern basin of the lake has seen in recorded human history (Kives 2006; McCullough n.d.). The Lake Winnipeg Research Consortium (2007) states: "Scientific evidence accumulated over the last 70 years now reveals that Lake Winnipeg is approaching a state of deterioration that may affect ecosystem sustainability." Eutrophication (nutrient loading) of a similar degree as that seen in Lake Erie in the 1960s is happening today in Lake Winnipeg.

Given the situation, and the environmental, economic and recreational effects it could have, it is important that effective action be taken on this problem, and policies be passed that can stabilize and reverse the problem. Governance and participatory democracy theory suggest that strong policy can stem from the inclusion of all societal voices in discussion of options, and that the public must have a strong base of information in order to participate fully in democracy. The news media can be an important vehicle for these voices, particularly if public consultation processes carried out by governments are not comprehensive or do not significantly inform policy outcomes. While this thesis does not study whether or not government consultation of the public has been satisfactory for the Lake Winnipeg issue, it does examine the degree to which the largest daily newspaper in Manitoba, the *Winnipeg Free Press*, serves its responsibility to democracy by seeking a variety of sources and how equally it treats these sources. In addition, the media outreach activities of civil society, which can act as a valuable societal balance to governmental and business interests, is important to study for it is civil society that may be able

to provide the least self-interested information to the news media on the state of the watershed. The perspectives of civil society are key for readers to have full understanding of the Lake Winnipeg nutrient loading situations. In essence, this research can provide an indication of

     i) whether or not the *Winnipeg Free Press* is providing citizens with adequate information for informed decision-making;

     ii) whether or not civil society voices are being heard in the news media; and, if not,

     iii) what barriers or restrictions are limiting *Winnipeg Free Press* attention to civil society voices.

1.4 Research contributions

1.4.1 Academic contributions

From an academic perspective, this project is meant to contribute to and integrate the following literatures: good governance, participatory democracy, civil society, news agenda-building, news framing and the responsibilities of journalism. Few studies exist that explore the intersections of civil society organizations, journalism and good governance. In particular, this research strengthens the area of literature on civil society's ability to contribute to democracy via the news media. Two specific areas that are weak in academic literature concern 1) the inclusion and prominence of civil society sources in the news media, as identified by content analysis (the majority of studies focus on political sources) and 2) factors that may restrict civil society communications outreach to the news media. In particular, there is a lack of literature studying Canadian aspects of civil society and responsible journalism. This research will help develop understanding of the Canadian situation.

1.4.2 Practical contributions

From a practical perspective, this research could be useful to a number of audiences. First, the analysis of civil society groups with an interest in nutrient loading identifies gaps and potential problems in media communications by these groups, and makes recommendations to address these problems. Since objective self-reflection is sometimes a difficult task, analysis from an observer could be useful for the relevant civil society groups' self-understandings.

Second, journalists, editors and publishers could benefit from the content analysis of news coverage, and of interview findings about how civil society members perceive coverage.

The framing of the discussion in the context of governance, participatory democracy and public journalism literature could prompt journalists to evaluate their responsibilities as journalists, how they select information and how they frame sources. Again, self-reflection is a difficult task, and it could be beneficial for journalists who cover the topic of Lake Winnipeg water quality to experience analysis of their work.

Third, the Manitoban public could benefit from better understanding of how their news on Lake Winnipeg nutrient loading is presented to them, particularly how certain sources dominate over others. This research could make the public more alert to bias in the information they receive.[1]

Fourth, funders and regulators of civil society, particularly the provincial and federal governments, could gain understanding of the negative effects on participatory democracy of *Income Tax Act* regulation of charity activities, and of expectations for non-charities to refrain from many "political" activities if they receive governmental funding.

Finally, it should be recognized that the Lake Winnipeg watershed is experiencing a situation shared by many watersheds and water bodies around the world: eutrophication (along with other water quality concerns). This detailed study of civil society-media interactions, and the resulting news coverage from these interactions, provides a case study that civil society organizations in other watersheds can compare to their own experiences. Perhaps, as a result of observations and recommendations in this thesis, they will be able to improve their own communications activities. These findings could also be transferable to civil society groups with interests other than water (e.g. climate change, biodiversity, health etc.)

1.5 Limitations and Boundaries

Nutrient loading is a situation faced by water bodies around the world and, as such, these research findings may be useful to other watersheds, as well as to other regions of the Lake Winnipeg watershed not focused on in the thesis (e.g. Minnesota, Saskatchewan). However, it should be recognized that political, economic, social and environmental concerns will be somewhat different in other watersheds, and these differences limit generalizability to some degree. For instance, the considerable discussion in this research on the hog industry may be less

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[1] I recognize that normally the public is not exposed to academic findings. However, I will endeavour to publish some of my findings in publications that may be encountered by the public.

useful to watersheds without intensive livestock operations. Also, other watersheds may have different civil society structures; for instance, while Manitoba does not have a strong water advocacy group to speak to the media (one of this thesis's findings), other watersheds do have the benefit of advocacy-oriented water groups.

More profoundly, a conceptual limitation of this thesis is its focus on good governance in watersheds. This research may be of limited short term usefulness to water bodies that are not in democratic countries (e.g. dictatorships). Generalizability to watersheds in democracies where the civil society is less fully formed than in Canada is also limited. In addition, this research is less valuable in watersheds where the news media are not independent (e.g. where they are controlled by the government) or where literacy rates are low, resulting in lower newspaper readership. In short, this research is most likely to benefit watersheds in established democracies with fairly independent news media.

A few particular factors, such as the effects of Canada's *Income Tax Act* on civil society, further limit generalizability, as each country has its own laws in this area.

There are several temporal boundaries on this research. First, the content analysis includes only articles from August 1991 through December 2008. Also, only those civil society groups in existence in 2009 were consulted; groups that disbanded before 2009 were not sought as interviewees. Therefore, findings may be skewed towards more recent events.

1.6 Methodology

1.6.1 Choice of case study: Lake Winnipeg watershed

The portion of the Lake Winnipeg Watershed that is within Manitoba was the study site for this case, though some subjects discussed are outside of Manitoba (e.g. Devils Lake, North Dakota). Lake Winnipeg was chosen because the time is opportune to study it; civil society organizations have formed, and continue to form around the issue, policy is currently being developed to address pollution problems and there is frequent news media coverage on the related sub-topics. The case of Lake Winnipeg fits Schwandt's (1997) description of why a single sampling site might be chosen. He writes: "A single place may be chosen because in that site one has good reason to believe that…the social process unfolding there is extreme, deviant or unique…or the site of the case is particularly revelatory…" (141). Indeed, a process is

unfolding in Manitoba anda study of the unfolding process and which voices dominate this process, and why, will produce both practically and academically useful results.

1.6.2 Methodology overview

The first logical step of this research was to explore the concepts that inform the framework of this research through a literature review. This review is necessary because the interdisciplinary areas of literature underpin the design of the content analysis and of the interview questions, the other two avenues of inquiry. Newspaper content analysis was appropriate, as it is an established way to collect quantitative data on newspaper content. The interview method complements the content analysis with qualitative data. Together, these three methods of inquiry allow for triangulation of findings. Detailed discussions of the methods are provided in the relevant chapters.

1.7 Thesis structure

This thesis is presented in seven chapters that proceed in a logical order for reader comprehension. Case study background and literature review information are presented before specific findings are presented. The final chapters move from presenting data to analysis.

Chapter 1 has provided a thesis overview, the research questions from which this inquiry stems, the rationale, academic and practical contributions, limitations and boundaries and a methodology overview.

Chapter 2 provides necessary background information on the Lake Winnipeg nutrient loading issue, details the many nutrient inputs that contribute to the problem, and explains the political, economic and social circumstances in which this environmental problem exists.

Chapter 3 reviews relevant literature from governance, democracy, civil society and mass media research that underpins this study. The chapter specifies appropriate understandings of key terms that have various interpretations throughout academia, in order to allow the reader to follow later analysis better. Where possible, literature relating to Canada is discussed to provide proper context. The chapter concludes with a framework tying the concepts together.

Chapter 4 presents a detailed description of the content analysis methodology, an overview and rationales for hypotheses explored, and findings from the content analysis of the *Winnipeg Free Press* as related to these hypotheses.

Chapter 5 reports and considers qualitative data from interviews with members of civil society organizations with an interest in Lake Winnipeg nutrient loading. Similarities and differences in perspectives put forward by interviewees are highlighted.

Chapter 6 evaluates findings from the three methods of inquiry (literature review, content analysis, interviews). In particular, this chapter discusses the implications for democracy and good governance indicated by the content analysis and interview data and provides recommendations for how to improve the inclusion of civil society in the news media. These recommendations focus on what both newspapers and civil society members can do to overcome shortcomings.

Finally, **Chapter 7** concludes the thesis with a summary of key findings and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Background

2.0 Introduction

Three major rivers (the Red River, the Winnipeg River and Saskatchewan River) and numerous other, smaller ones flow into Lake Winnipeg. The Red River flows from the south, the Winnipeg River from the east and the Saskatchewan River from the west, and together they drain an area that encompasses four provinces and four states (see Figure 2.1). The lake has the "largest land drainage to surface area ratio" of any great North American lake, resulting in greater opportunity for contaminants to enter the waterways that eventually lead to the lake (Lake Winnipeg Research Consortium n.d.a).

While there are many contaminants that can threaten water quality (e.g. chemicals from mining, pesticides from farming and urban uses), the contaminants of greatest concern to Lake Winnipeg are nutrients, specifically nitrogen and phosphorus. Flowing through naturally fertile

Figure 2.1: Lake Winnipeg Watershed

Source: Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board. Used with permission.
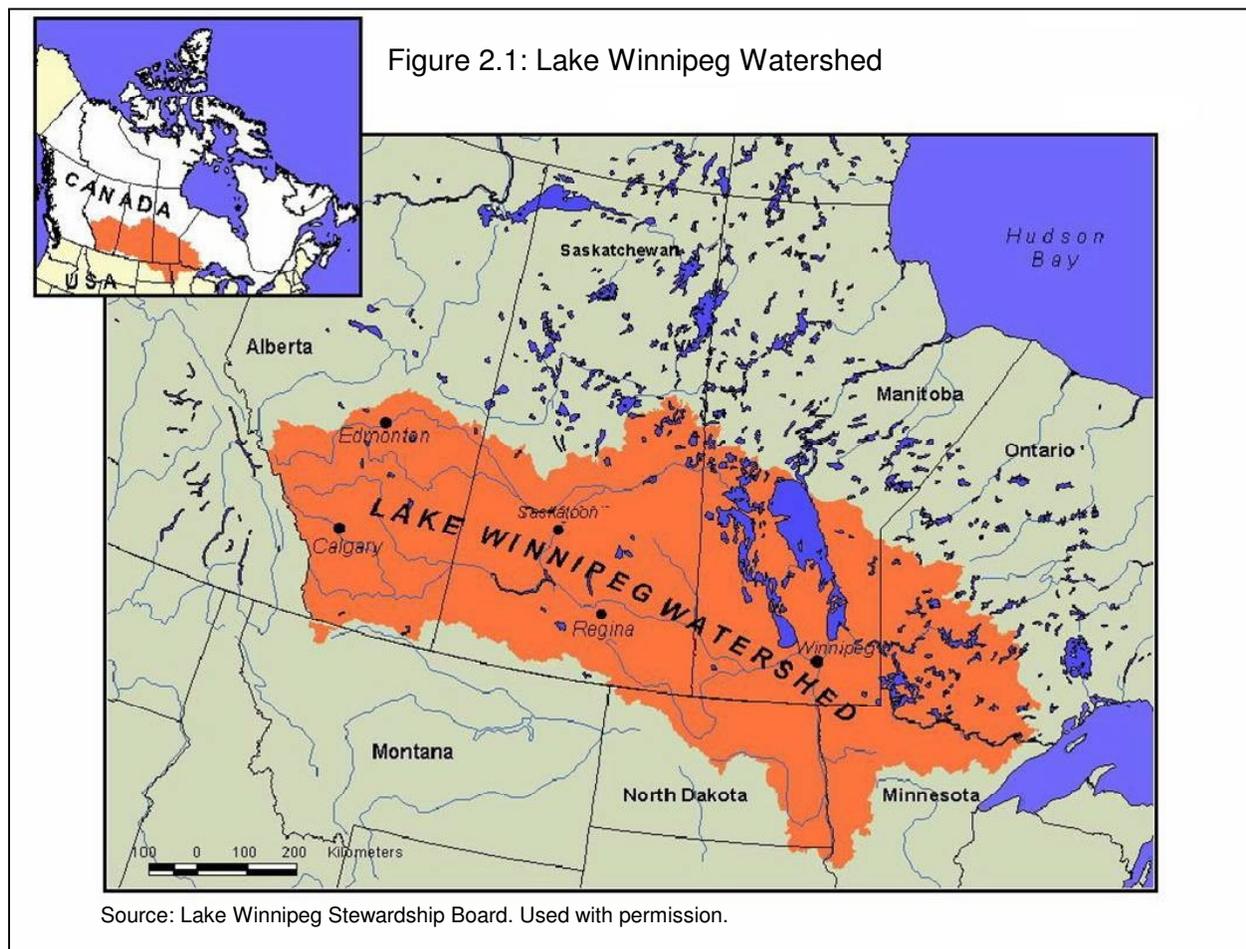
lands, the rivers of the Lake Winnipeg watershed bring not only nutrients that would be entering the waterways even if human settlement had never occurred, but also nutrients from many anthropogenic sources. These include agricultural, wastewater, industrial, cosmetic fertilizer and dishwasher detergent sources. In addition, alterations to the landscape such as the removal of natural vegetation along waterways, the creation of enhanced drainage systems to hasten water run-off and the drainage of wetlands all contribute to the nutrient loading problem. Even climate change is predicted to be a significant factor in nutrient-related problems on the lake through the creation of favourable conditions for algal blooms. This chapter explores each of these contributors to Lake Winnipeg's eutrophication, considers policy and civil society action that has begun to deal with some of these problems, and provides background necessary to allow the reader to understand the findings of this thesis in the proper context.

2.1 Watershed description

It could be said that Manitoba has had "seas" of some sort for millennia. First, it was covered by a sea of ice during the last major ice age. Then, it was covered by Lake Agassiz, a massive inland sea formed by glacial meltwaters. Finally, it took on its current geography, which includes seas of prairie grasses (or, since the arrival of modern agriculture, seas of cultivated crops) and the inland sea of Lake Winnipeg, the tenth largest freshwater body in the world. The Cree word for the Lake, *kitchi-wee-ni-pake*, even means "great sea" (Russell 2004a, 10).

Today, Lake Winnipeg covers 4% of Manitoba, being 25,514 square kilometres and 425 kilometres long (Manitoba Water Stewardship n.d.a). It is almost the same size as Lake Erie (25,670 square kilometres), another Canadian lake that has had pollution problems (Russell 2004a). Despite its size, it is relatively understudied compared to other large lakes. According to Russell, "Only Great Bear Lake in the Northwest Territories has received less attention among the world's 10 largest freshwater lakes. Lakes Michigan, Erie, and Ontario have had 3,085, 2,590 and 1,712 environmental and pollution management studies respectively conducted on them; by comparison, Lake Winnipeg has had 73" (166).

One reason why Lake Winnipeg's environmental problems are complex is that its watershed is so vast. The drainage basin of Lake Erie covers 78,000 sq. km (Great Lakes Information Network 2006) whereas Lake Winnipeg's drainage basin covers 990,660 sq. km, the second largest in North America (Russell 2004a). Therefore, controlling what enters the rivers

that feed Lake Winnipeg is more difficult than the Lake Erie situation, in which the relatively simple control of laundry detergents helped to mitigate the lake's nutrient overloading problem. Both watersheds are multi-jurisdictional, but Lake Winnipeg's land area stretches from the Rocky Mountains to within 20 kilometres of Lake Superior,[2] and includes four provinces (Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario) and four states (Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota).

Much of the water that enters the lake has flowed through agricultural lands. Agriculture is of great economic importance throughout the prairies. North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota are amongst the states most reliant on agriculture (Agri-Food Research and Development Initiative n.d.). In Canada, the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba rely more on primary agricultural production than on food processing; it is east of Manitoba that food processing has a higher contribution to GDP (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 2007). Primary agricultural production often requires nutrient inputs for crops, which could result in nutrients entering waterways.[3]

As recently as the 1970s, Lake Winnipeg was viewed as a healthy ecosystem with nearly boundless possibilities for leisure and fishing. Write Gill and Taylor in their 1971 book: "With the rapid growth in recreational boating in Canada, the future of Lake Winnipeg is assured" (21). There is no hint of concern over the health of the lake in this publication. A 1974 Canada-Manitoba task force did express concern over watershed pollution and recommended more vigorous study, but its warning went largely unheeded for decades (Welch 2008a). "[F]ive successive provincial governments waited more than 30 years to take action, allowing the nutrients now choking the lake to grow by more than 50 per cent" (A7).

The Progressive Conservative party was in power in Manitoba from 1988 to 1999, during which time it encouraged the growth of the hog industry, now one of the more contentious sources of nutrients (see section 2.2.1, below). When the New Democratic Party took political power in 1999 under Gary Doer, some stakeholders feel governmental action on water quality was not significantly altered for some time (e.g. Nairne 2000; Ridgen 2001; Schroedter 2003).

The gate to better water awareness was opened due to the flood of 1997, commonly referred to as the "Flood of the Century." Studies into the effects of the flood illuminated the

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[2] Other numbers given for the watershed's proximity to Lake Superior are 20 km (Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board 2006) and 80 km (Russell 2004a).
[3] Food processing, such as potato processing plants, can also lead to nutrient loading.

state of Lake Winnipeg, and finally raised alarm from scientists that was heeded by the news media and government. The flood contributed to higher levels of nitrogen, phosphorus, sediment, fecal coliforms, fecal streptococci, nickel, zinc, arsenic, lead, manganese and pesticides (DDT, dieldrin, chlordane, toxaphene), among other substances (Currie, Williamson & Brigham 1998; International Joint Commission n.d.b; Tjaden 2000). Nitrogen and phosphorus were present on the land, both due to their natural presence and due to artificial fertilizers; when the land flooded, they were washed into the rivers and streams that lead to Lake Winnipeg. While floods are a natural disaster, certain human activities, such as the acceleration of drainage and the removal of wetlands, can result in more severe floods.

The 1997 flood was a major reason why non-governmental organization, the Lake Winnipeg Research Consortium, was formed; scientists wanted to know how lake water quality was affected by the event. Other entities created since the 1997 flood, and in part due to scrutiny of water quality due to the flood, include the Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board (a provincially-appointed board that makes recommendations to government), the Red River Basin Commission (a cross-border entity that encourages multi-stakeholder cooperation to achieve water stewardship) and the Lake Winnipeg Foundation (a non-profit organization that supports research, education and advocacy for the lake).

Numerous other groups and organizations also formed to address the issue of water quality, while already existing organizations increased their activities in this area. These groups include, but are not limited to, the Manitoba Water Caucus, Hog Watch Manitoba, the International Institute for Sustainable Development, the Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources, Save Our Lake, Manitoba Wildlands, Friends of the Earth Canada, the Manitoba Association of Cottage Owners, the Southern Chiefs Association, Winnipeg Water Watch Coalition, Ducks Unlimited Canada, the Frontier Centre for Public Policy and the eighteen conservation district associations that exist in the province. These organizations have all been involved in activities about the health of the lake, and they have used various methods, including supplying information for newspaper reports, creating organizational newsletters, carrying out public education work, attending and presenting at public meetings and lobbying government.

Water quality concerns also led to the formation in 2003 of the first provincial department to focus on water quality, Manitoba Water Stewardship (2007), which deals with various water-related topics, including flood protection, lake and river water quality, drinking

water quality, wastewater[4] and water use efficiency. Since its inception, the department has taken numerous actions to improve Lake Winnipeg water quality. Of particular note, the 2006 Water Protection Act (Government of Manitoba) includes such measures as restricting development in areas where development could easily lead to water contamination (e.g. sandy soils, steep slopes), giving the government power to require areas to develop watershed management plans and creating a "Water Stewardship Fund" to provide grants for research and activities that contribute to the purposes of the Act.

In this dissertation, it is important to detail the inputs and activities affecting the quality of the lake in order to understand why the news media have focused some energies on the topics, why civil society organizations have taken up the Lake Winnipeg cause and why government at all levels has taken an interest. These threats to water quality are discussed below.

2.2 Nutrient Loading Overview

Perhaps the most prominent Lake Winnipeg problem in recent years has been that of nutrient loading to the lake, primarily of nitrogen and phosphorus. Since the 1970s, phosphorus loading to the Lake has increased by approximately 10%, and nitrogen loading by 13% (Bourne, Armstrong & Jones 2002; Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board 2006). This increase in nutrients has led to eutrophication, "the excessive growth of aquatic plants, particularly algae, in response to elevated levels of phosphorus and nitrogen" (Manitoba Clean Environment Commission 2007a, 39). Of particular concern is the increasing number of algal blooms; in July 1999 and August 2003, blooms of 8,000-square-kilometres and 6,000-square kilometres, respectively, were noted in the northern basin of the lake (Russell 2004b). In July and August of 2006 massive blooms occurred in the more populated southern basin (Giroday 2006; Kives 2006c; McCullough n.d.; Paul 2006).[5] One of the 2006 blooms occurred on a long weekend and materialized on the popular vacation spots of Grand Beach, Victoria Beach and Grindstone Beach, thereby increasing public awareness of the issue.

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[4] Wastewater is generally dealt with at a municipal level, but the province has jurisdiction to direct wastewater activities. In recent years, it has at times done so, for instance, by insisting that Winnipeg speed up its plan to improve wastewater treatment.

[5] For a further listing of algal blooms, see satellite images at http://home.cc.umanitoba.ca/~gmccullo/LWsat.htm. Here, Lake Winnipeg Research Consortium researcher, Greg McCullough (n.d.), notes some of the more significant blooms and offers descriptions.

Lake Winnipeg Research Consortium scientists on the *Namao* sailed through the 2003 bloom and described it as "like sailing across a sea of thick green paint" (Russell 2004a,169). There has been a documented increase in cyanophyte, or blue-green algae, which is reliant on phosphorus (Kling 1998). It is a concern because it releases toxins as it decomposes and can create "dead zones" of low oxygen that threaten the survival of organisms. One such dead zone was found in 2003 by scientists (Portman 2004a; Portman 2004b).

Bourne, Armstrong and Jones (2002) suggest that certain non-point watershed processes contribute the largest amount of nutrients in the Red and Assiniboine Rivers, including via "run-off of nutrients from diffuse agricultural sources and from natural processes" (46). The Assiniboine acquires 71% of its nitrogen and 76% of its phosphorus from watershed processes, and the Red 59% of nitrogen and 73% of phosphorus (46). Watershed processes include both natural and anthropogenic sources, including atmospheric deposition, "[t]he application of livestock manure to agricultural land, lawns, and gardens," release from soils and decaying vegetation, "enhanced drainage and reduced riparian vegetation" and the use of inorganic fertilizer (7) (See section 2.2.6a).

The Red River, which starts 507 km away at Lake Traverse, South Dakota,[6] is the greatest contributor of nutrients in general (Robertson 1994). The Red contributes approximately 54% of phosphorus loading and 30% of nitrogen to the Lake, compared to the next biggest contributor, the Winnipeg River, at 11% of phosphorus and 18% of nitrogen.

The fact that the watershed is so large and multi-jurisdictional makes it difficult to resolve the problem; Manitoba contributes only 47% of phosphorus inputs and 49% of nitrogen. The rest comes from other provinces and states, making Lake Winnipeg eutrophication a national and international matter. Approximately 53% of phosphorus loading comes from outside of Manitoba, much of that from the Red, Souris, Assiniboine, Saskatchewan and Winnipeg Rivers before they enter Manitoba (Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board 2006). Because there is no one predominant contributor, the Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board, a provincial government-appointed board that makes recommendations, considers reducing nutrient input to the lake to be a "collective responsibility."

It should be recognized that information in this chapter focuses primarily on nutrient loading factors within the province of Manitoba. The environmental, social, economic and

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[6] The actual length of the Red River is 877 km. It is 507 km "as the crow flies" (Robertson 1994).

political dynamics within Manitoba that contribute to Lake Winnipeg nutrient loading provide for rich analysis in this thesis. To fully consider background factors in all other provinces and states is outside the scope of this research, though complete documentation of nutrient loading within the watershed would perhaps be useful information for stakeholders. Therefore, the reader is encouraged to keep in mind that more than 50% of nutrient loading comes from outside of Manitoba through the same processes as those that occur within Manitoba, though these occur in different proportions in other jurisdictions; for instance, hog farming is more prevalent in Manitoba than in other provinces and states. As for another example, different laws regarding sewage and wastewater treatment result in different amounts of loading per unit of wastewater.

2.2.1 Agriculture

Agriculture is a mainstay of Manitoba's economy, indirectly contributing 12.6% of the provincial GDP in 2002 (Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives, 2003). The province has 11.4% of the farmland in Canada (Government of Manitoba 2006) but only 3.7% of the Canadian population.

Both livestock and crop farming are major contributors to agricultural production. Both are also significant contributors to nutrient pollution; agriculture in all its forms is responsible for an estimated 15% of phosphorus loading to Lake Winnipeg and 5% of nitrogen loading (Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board 2006).

The livestock sector, particularly the hog industry, has protested that it has received an inordinate amount of blame for Lake Winnipeg nutrient loading (Kynoch 2006a; Kynoch 2006b; Kynoch 2007; Kynoch 2008; Unfriendly Manitoba n.d.). Indeed, this industry is often viewed as environmentally problematic; Steinfeld et al. (2006) describe the livestock sector as "one of the top two or three most significant contributors to the most serious environmental problems, at every scale from local to global" (Steinfeld et al. 2006, as cited in Manitoba Clean Environment Commission 2007, 6). In response to blame over Lake Winnipeg pollution, Manitoba's hog industry states that it only contributes 1 to 2% of nutrients, and even placed a two-page advertisement in the *Winnipeg Free Press* stressing this fact (described in Baron 2007). This statistic is questioned by many, and no official, peer-reviewed paper or government document confirms it is accurate. Rather, the statistic was generated from unpublished "technical notes" in which the scientist who wrote them cautions "The 1% estimate is not a precise figure; it's a rough

estimate with some substantial assumptions"[7] (Baron 2007; Flaten n.d.). Despite the problems with the statistic that the hog industry contributes 1% of phosphorus, the number has many times been presented as established fact.

Renowned water expert, David Schindler, has pointed to intensive livestock operations as major causes of eutrophication; he has openly criticized the Alberta livestock industry, part of which is also in the Lake Winnipeg watershed, noting that waste from the human population of 3 million people in the watershed treated, but that from the 8 million hogs and cattle, "each producing waste equivalent to 10 or 11 people," is not. He explains:

> So we have a human equivalent population of 84 million. We control the (phosphorus output) of the three million actual humans with municipal sewage systems. We take out the phosphorus and treat it for pathogens. To the other 84 million virtual humans we say, 'Well, just go crap on the land or in a pit somewhere and then spray it around and that's OK' (Russell 2004a, 170)

This description of manure disposal may be an exaggeration – in Manitoba, for instance, hog manure storage regulations were found to be satisfactory by the Manitoba Clean Environment Commission (an entity created to enable public input and provide advice to the Minister of Conservation) and an increasing number of operators are injecting, not spreading, their manure, because injection results in fewer pollutants entering waterways (Government of Manitoba 2006; Manitoba Clean Environment Commission 2007b). However, a recent Manitoba Agricultural Profile (Government of Manitoba 2006) indicates that, in 2005, only 7.6% of manure was injected, while other manure was spread on the surface as solid or liquid, or incorporated using an irrigation system.[8] Nevertheless, the nutrient outputs of livestock continue to be a concern in Manitoba. Many groups (e.g. Hog Watch, Beyond Factor Farming, OlyOpp Alliance, Manitoba Wildlands, Concerned Citizens of Gross Isle Committee) and individual

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[7] Baron suggests that the most important assumption is "that all agricultural sources of phosphorus -- from synthetic fertilizer applied by grain farmers to liquid hog wastes disposed of by industrial hog barn owners -- move at an equal rate into Manitoba waters…" (Baron 2007, A14). Another problem relates to the fact that prior to changes to the Livestock Manure and Mortalities Management Regulation in 2006 (Government of Manitoba 1998), manure applied to farmland often contained more phosphorus than crops could use, resulting in "a build-up [of] phosphorus in the soil,… soil phosphorus saturation and the subsequent release of phosphorus when water travel[ed]through the soil matrix" (Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board 2005, 24).

[8] It is unclear in the profile how much of this manure was from hogs, and how much from other livestock.

citizens (e.g. Arklie 2007; Clubb 2007; Marykuca 2007; Pip n.d.; Pryzner 2007; Pryzner & Dolecki 2004) have voiced concerns about the industry.[9]

In 1994, after the release of the report *Manitoba's Pork Industry: Building for the 21st Century Prospects and Challenges* (Manitoba Pork Study Committee 1994)*,* the then Conservative government of Manitoba began to pursue the goal of making the province a "North American pork powerhouse" (Manitoba Clean Environment Commission 2007b, 15). The report "recommended that the province adopt a strategy aimed at doubling pork production and processing..." (21). This goal was achieved; in 1997 there were 4 million hogs in Manitoba, and by 2006 there were 8.8 million, about "24% of national production and about 6% of North American production" (Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives 2006). "The industry was intended to capitalize on what was sometimes described as the Manitoba advantage: cheap land, cheap feed, and a low-population density in rural Manitoba" (20). Approximately 28% of these hogs are in just two rural municipalities, Hanover and La Broquerie, that border the Red River.

This boom worried many, including concerned citizens, from its start. For instance, residents of the rural municipality of Stuartburn formed the Concerned Citizens of Gardenton group in order to resist the industry entering their area (Reeves 2007). In 2007, a Manitoba Clean Environment Commission report questioned the wisdom of this "haphazard growth of the industry" (vi) and made recommendations for more controls and regulations.

These concerns over sustainability led the province in November 2006 to declare a moratorium on all new and expanding hog barns until the Manitoba Clean Environment Commission could conduct its review of the industry. In March 2008, the provincial government lifted the moratorium on part of the province, but left it in place indefinitely in three regions in which the province believed the industry was already above sustainable capacity, where the land was "prone to widespread flooding" or where there were sensitive ecosystems (Manitoba Conservation 2008; Welch 2008b). These areas include part of south-eastern Manitoba, including the above-mentioned Hanover and La Broquerie, as well as part of the Red River valley and the Interlake.[10]

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[9] Naturally, there have also been many voices in support of the industry. See Manitoba Clean Environment Commission (2007b) *Hog Production Industry Review Document Record* for examples.
[10] The Interlake is the area of land between Lake Winnipeg and Lakes Manitoba and Winnipegosis.

Other types of livestock agriculture in Manitoba are regulated by other legislation, and each type inevitably produces some nutrients. The government of Manitoba notes the following types of livestock as part of the Manitoban industry: beef, bison, dairy cattle, elk, goats, pigs, poultry, sheep and wild boar (Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives n.d.). The Manitoba Government says it created pork-specific legislation because it is the only industry that has grown exponentially (Kives 2006a).

In addition to legislation controlling livestock, the government has created recent legislation for fertilizer application on fields, because crop farming is also part of the Lake Winnipeg nutrient equation. Some of this fertilizer comes from hogs,[11] while other types are synthetic, and are shipped in from as far away as West Africa (Kives 2006a). Application of fertilizer to land is governed under the Nutrient Management Regulations, which were phased in by January 1, 2009 (Government of Manitoba 2008a). These regulations created six water quality management zones (and regulations specific to each zone), banned winter application of fertilizers and municipal wastewater sludges and created "Nutrient Buffer Zones," prohibiting fertilizer application within certain distances from water sources (Manitoba Water Stewardship n.d.b; Manitoba Water Stewardship n.d.c).

2.2.2 Wastewater and sewage

Municipal wastewater represents a major point source of nutrient pollution in the Lake Winnipeg watershed. The City of Winnipeg alone accounts for 5% of phosphorus loading and 4% of nitrogen loading to the Lake (Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board 2006). The 200 smaller wastewater facilities in Manitoba represent another 4% of phosphorus loading and 1% of total nitrogen (51). Winnipeg's water treatment and protection standards lag behind many of those elsewhere in the watershed. Edmonton, Calgary,[12] Saskatoon and Regina have standards of 1 mg/L of phosphorus for effluent, and 5-15 mg/L of nitrogen, compared to Winnipeg's current

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[11] It should be noted that fertilizer from hogs is of somewhat greater concern because it can lead to the application of more phosphorus than the crops are able to uptake. Since 1994, Manitoba's Livestock Manure and Mortalities Management Regulation (LMMMR) required that manure application not exceed the "nitrogen crop-removal rate" (Government of Manitoba 1994). Phosphorus uptake was not considered. This measurement resulted in phosphorus being applied at levels four to six times higher than the "phosphorus crop-removal rate" (Manitoba Clean Environment Commission 2007a, 84). Changes to regulations in 2006 have helped remedy this problem.

[12] Calgary's municipal wastewater empties into the Bow River. The Bow River then flows into the South Saskatchewan River, which joins the Saskatchewan River, which empties into Lake Winnipeg (Atlas of Canada 2008). Therefore, Calgary's wastewater ends up in Lake Winnipeg.

average effluent quality of 3.3 mg/L of phosphorus and 30 mg/L of nitrogen (18).[13] Calgary's standards for its tertiary treatment systems are "among the most stringent in North America" (Sierra Legal Defence Fund 2004). Minnesota, too, requires phosphorus removal to 1 mg/L (46). In contrast to these places, the cities of Winnipeg, Portage La Prairie (Manitoba), Grand Forks (North Dakota) and Fargo (North Dakota) had no phosphorus standards for effluent in 2006.

Only recently did Winnipeg begin phosphorus removal at its three treatment plants. A 2003 report by the Manitoba Clean Environment Commission strongly recommended that the province require the city "to take immediate steps" to reduce nutrient loading to Lake Winnipeg; prior to the review, the City had some mid to long-term plans to reduce loading, but the Manitoba Clean Environment Commission felt Winnipeg should accelerate its timeline. Wrote the Commission:

> The Commission believes there is evidence to substantiate that Winnipeg's treated municipal wastewaters and untreated combined sewer overflows are adversely impacting the aquatic environments of the Red and Assiniboine rivers and Lake Winnipeg. While the Commission understands that Winnipeg is not the only contributor of pollutants to the Red and Assiniboine rivers or nutrients to Lake Winnipeg, the City's wastewater treatment plants and combined sewer outfalls are point sources that can be controlled. This provides the City of Winnipeg with an opportunity to take responsible action and demonstrate environmental stewardship for the benefit of all Manitobans. (iii)

Winnipeg is now required to incorporate nutrient removal at its West End Plant in 2008, by 2012 at the South End Plant and by 2014 at the North End Plant. The total cost for these measures will be approximately $670 million, resulting in nutrient loading to Lake Winnipeg reductions of 2 to 3% (MacDonald 2009). Other required sewage system upgrades, including the reduction of combined sewage overflows,[14] will increase the total cost to $1.2 billion. The percentage of nutrient loading reduction seems so small to some that it has been argued the cost is not worth the benefit, but others pointed to the fact that since there is no one largest contributor to nutrient loading, each reduction is significant (Lake Winnipeg Research Consortium n.d.b; Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board 2006).

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[13] Effluent quality is required to improve in the future. According to the City of Winnipeg's sewage licences, improvements are required by specific dates. For example, sewage at the North End Water Pollution Control Centre must have no more than 1 mg/L of phosphorus and 15 mg/L of nitrogen on and after December 31, 2014 (City of Winnipeg 2009). Each wastewater treatment plant is on a different schedule for effluent quality improvement.

[14] Sewer outflows occur due to Winnipeg's combined wastewater and stormwater system. During periods of heavy rain, the system becomes overloaded and raw sewage flows into the Red River, an average of 18 times per year. (Lehr 2005).

Changes are slower for the 200 smaller municipal wastewater treatment systems in the province, about 75 of which are known to need upgrades (Welch 2008c). The towns of Gimli and Hecla, both located on Lake Winnipeg, are unusual in that they have chosen to construct treatment facilities that remove phosphorus to 1 mg/L. Most smaller towns have lagoons, not treatment plants, that generally release effluent with approximately 5 mg/L (Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board 2006, 19).

Additionally, septic fields are problematic in many parts of the province. While Manitoba Conservation has no exact numbers on how many fields exist, it is thought that about 50% of the 20,000 to 30,000 fields between Winnipeg and Lake Winnipeg are failing (Welch 2007). Reasons for these failures include the fact that most are built on heavy clay soil which is not well suited for septic fields, that housing density is too high in some areas and that some of the fields, built in the 1970s or 1980s, have simply reached the end of their useful lives and require replacement. Recent measures to address the problem include plans by the Red River Infrastructure Committee to raise $66 million from various levels of government and from home-owners for proper sewage treatment for five political entities in this corridor (East St. Paul, St. Andrews, St. Clements, West St. Paul, City of Selkirk). The cost to each household is expected to be approximately $13,333 and the plan is not yet certain, nor are sufficient government funds yet acquired (Red River Infrastructure Committee 2008; Skerritt 2007). Malfunctioning septic fields result in septic field saturation and pools of standing wastewater on the ground surface, which can then run into waterways and make their way into Lake Winnipeg.

Several non-nutrient problems that stem from sewage also bear discussion. Many contaminants commonly present in municipal wastewater are not removed. These include "oil, grease and solvents, food wastes, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics… metals… and a variety of synthetic organic substances" (Manitoba Clean Environment Commission 2003, 35)." The Sierra Legal Defence Fund (2004) notes that some toxins bioaccumulate,[15] and "play havoc with…birds, mammals and other sensitive marine life and ultimately are consumed by humans through fish…we eat" (4).

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[15] Bioaccumulation is "the uptake and retention of substances in organisms" (Draper 2002, 512).

One substance of particular concern is copper sulphate, a persistent chemical used to kill algae (Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada 2002; Fallding 2003a).[16] While it can only be used legally in self-contained bodies of water such as dugouts, and should therefore not be used in places contributing to contamination in Lake Winnipeg, a 2008 study found that in 75% of the lake water tested, copper sulphate levels were "above the Canadian water quality guidelines for safety of aquatic life" (Rollason 2008). This finding led to questions about the safety of water for human intake, as well.

Secondly, the Manitoba Clean Environment Commission report (2003) criticized the City of Winnipeg for disposing of landfill leachate at wastewater plants. It was explained at the hearing that treatment plants "were never meant to treat leachate from landfills. Consequently, sewage treatment plants are not efficient at treating leachate and its many toxic constituents, which pass through the treatment process and end up in the wastewater or the sludge" (39). A total of 108 chemicals were found in the leachate, many of them "persistent[17] and bioaccumulative in the environment" (39).

2.2.3 Industry
Various types of other industry apart from livestock raising and grain farming contribute nutrients to the Lake Winnipeg watershed. These industries include pulp and paper, meat packaging and potato processing (Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board 2006). Bourne, Armstrong and Jones (2002) note the problematic nature of trying to estimate the actual inputs from these industries. Available data are limited, and many of the thirty-two industry facilities "licensed to discharge to surface waters in Manitoba" do not monitor for phosphorus and nitrogen (Bourne, Armstrong & Jones 2002, 23). Some also have their effluent treated by municipal wastewater treatment systems; therefore, industrial contributions are often grouped with municipal wastewater in statistical data and may be "underestimated" (35). For instance, the McCain Foods potato processing plant in Brandon has its effluent treated by the city and Bourne, Armstrong and Jones could not separate its nutrients load from that of domestic wastewater (28).

A few companies, however, do have data available. These are Simplot Canada in Brandon (manufacturing), Maple Leaf Meats in Brandon (meat processing), Springhill Farms in

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[16] Ironically, the algicide does not solve the algae problem. Once the algae dies, it releases nutrients and "spawns another bloom" (Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada 2002, 15).
[17] Persistent substances are those which "do not break down easily in ecosystems and remain in the environment for long periods of time" (Draper 2002, 520).

Neepawa (meat processing) and Tembec in Pine Falls (pulp and paper) (24). The combined loadings from the four facilities represent 3.5% of all nitrogen input and 10% of phosphorus input.[18]

Kives (2006b), too, notes that industry is not always forthcoming with data; while he was able to tour Tembec's pulp and paper plant in Pine Falls, he found the hog industry less obliging. The pulp and paper industry, a partial cause of mercury contamination in Lake Winnipeg, and the closure of the Lake Winnipeg fishery for one year in 1969, attempts to minimize its nutrient output through such means as treating wood waste with micro-organisms that break down by-products so that they do not decompose in the river. Still, the Tembec plant alone releases 41 tonnes[19] of phosphorus per year, "equal to 5%" of phosphorus load from the Winnipeg River (A9).

The Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board (2006) recommended to the Manitoba government that "new or expanding" industrial facilities should have nutrient limits placed on their effluent at the same levels of those placed on wastewater treatment, "1 mg/L phosphorus and 15 mg/L of nitrogen" (45). In addition, the board recommended that smaller industrial facilities meet a 1mg/L standard for phosphorus.

2.2.4 Cosmetic Fertilizers

The Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board notes that while cosmetic fertilizer use is a relatively small contributor to the nutrient loading of Lake Winnipeg, reducing cosmetic fertilizer use is a change in which a large number of Manitobans can be involved (Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board 2005; Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board 2006). This applicability to so many Manitobans underscores the 2006 report's title, "Our Collective Responsibility." Therefore, the board recommended to the Government of Manitoba that it consider "province-wide restrictions on the use of phosphorus-based fertilizers for cosmetic purposes" (Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board 2006, 41).

The government heeded this advice and, on June 27, 2008, regulated that fertilizers on urban and built up lands should not could not legally contain "more than 1 per cent phosphorus

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[18] Nitrogen calculation: 181/5,170 = 0.035; phosphorus calculation: 67/667 = 0.10
[19] Bourne, Armstrong and Jones (2002) report that the Tembec plant releases 52 tonnes/year of phosphorus. However, they may have used statistics from a different year.

by weight" as of January 1, 2009.[20] Lawn fertilizers prior to that could contain up to 20% phosphorus (Government of Manitoba 2007a).

Manitoba is the second governmental entity in the watershed to enact such regulations; it modelled its regulation on that of Minnesota, also in the watershed, which adopted cosmetic fertilizer regulation in 2005. The state's action has led to "a nearly 50% reduction in phosphorus being applied in fertilizers to lawns in residential areas" (2007a).

2.2.5 Dishwasher detergents

It is estimated that automatic dishwasher detergents are responsible for 1 to 2% of phosphorus loading to Lake Winnipeg (Cash 2006; Lukovich 2006; Welch 2006). While the 1972 Canada Water Act, a response to nutrient loading in the Great Lakes, limited the amount of phosphates allowed in laundry detergents to 5%, dishwashing detergents were not targeted (Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board 2006). In 2006, the amount of phosphates in dishwashing detergents available in Manitoba ranged from zero to 8.7% (59).

In 2007, the Phosphorus Reduction Act was passed in Manitoba and will limit the amount of phosphorus in dishwashing detergents to 0.5% by July 1, 2010 (Government of Manitoba 2007b).[21] The government is also considering restricting phosphates in other cleaning products, but the province intends to consult with industry and the public before taking further action (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 2007).

In the United States, the states of Washington, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota and Vermont are among those that have committed to enacting a similar ban by July 1, 2010 (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 2007). In addition, the majority of dishwasher detergent manufacturers, as represented by the Canadian Consumer Speciality Products Association (CCSPA), representing about 90% of all suppliers (e.g. Procter and Gamble, Unilever), support such legislation in Canada and are imposing a voluntary ban on themselves by 2010 (Welch

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[20] Exceptions are allowed for lawns "during the first year in which the turf is first established…and the following year," and for lawns where phosphorus content is under a certain amount (Government of Manitoba, *The Water Protection Act*).

[21] The first attempt to limit the amount of phosphates in dishwasher detergents was a private member's bill introduced in the provincial legislature by Liberal leader, Jon Gerrard on November 21, 2006 (Government of Manitoba 2007c). Bill 201, The Phosphorus-Free Dishwashing Detergent Act, would have limited the amount of phosphorus allowed in household detergents to 0.5% by Jan. 1, 2009 and for commercial uses by Jan. 1, 2012. This bill was not supported by the ruling New Democratic Party, which introduced and passed the existing, similar bill a year later.

2006). Finally, in 2008, the Canadian federal government also announced it would limit phosphorus in dishwasher detergent to 0.5% by 2010 (Environment Canada 2008), a move that would benefit Lake Winnipeg given that waters from three other provinces (Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario) are in the watershed.

2.2.6a Watershed processes

  Watershed processes are the largest contributors to nutrient loading. The Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board (2006) reports: "Within Manitoba, watershed processes including natural background sources and agricultural activities contribute 67% and 49% of the total phosphorus and total nitrogen loadings, respectively, to Lake Winnipeg." (27). Bourne, Armstrong and Jones (2002) suggest that three of the five watershed processes they studied were fully anthropogenic (human-caused): those of the application of animal manure to lands, the application of inorganic fertilizer to lands, and enhanced drainage and reduced vegetation. The other two watershed processes discussed by the researchers, atmospheric deposition and release from soil and decaying vegetation, have both natural and human-caused components.

  The contributions to nutrient loading of Lake Winnipeg by applications of animal manure and inorganic fertilizer to lands could not be quantified by Bourne, Armstrong and Jones (2002) or Jones and Armstrong (2001). This data gap is not surprising, as nutrients applied to lands are non-point source pollutants, which are notoriously hard to measure. However, the lack of data is of interest to this thesis because nutrients from agriculture – hog manure in particular – are one of the most contentious contributors to nutrient loading affecting lake water quality. The debate over how much the hog industry contributes to nutrient loading due to the application of manure is reported in section 2.2.1.

  The contributing factor of enhanced drainage and reduced riparian vegetation is also hard to quantify, as it is also a non-point source (Bourne, Armstrong & Jones 2002). Efforts to speed up drainage from agricultural fields can lead to the transportation of fertilizers and eroded sediments into waterways. Write the authors: "Loss of riparian vegetation also allows nutrients to be more readily moved directly into surface water. Loss of riparian vegetation also may cause stream banks to become less stable and more prone to erosion of nutrient-rich sediments." (7). In other words, the loss of natural vegetation, such as prairie, wetlands and forest, contribute to nutrient loading because the soil is no longer as adequately held in place. Soil washed into the

waterways contains nutrients, thereby contributing to nutrient-loading, as well as increasing the turbidity of the water. Again, the authors could not determine the exact amount this watershed process contributes to nutrient loading. Voora and Venema (2008) view erosion control and sediment retention as a valuable ecosystem service that has been degraded by human settlement and as a factor in Lake Winnipeg eutrophication.

Fortunately, there are activities being undertaken in the watershed to reduce nutrient loading from drainage and erosion. For instance, the Red River Basin Commission, the eighteen local conservation districts in Manitoba and erosion control associations encourage such steps as planting vegetative buffers along waterways to keep soil on the land, restoration of stream banks after flooding to prevent further erosion and specific agricultural techniques (e.g. no-till farming) (East Interlake Conservation District n.d.; North American Stormwater and Erosion Control Association of Manitoba n.d.; Pembina Valley Conservation District. n.d.; Red River Basin Commission n.d.; Turtle Mountain Conservation District n.d.). The U.S. Department of Agriculture reports that riparian buffer zones can remove half of the nitrogen and phosphorus and three-quarters of the eroded sediment and soil (Oborne 2004b).

The last two watershed processes discussed by Bourne, Armstrong and Jones (2002), atmospheric deposition and release from soil and decaying vegetation, can be attributed to both natural and anthropogenic factors. The release of nutrients from soil relates to erosion, as the authors note: "land use practices can alter the amount of soil exposed to erosion" (7). Similarly, the amount of vegetative material available to release nutrients through decomposition can be influenced by human activities. Natural processes such as wind, rain and snowmelt are ultimately what leads these nutrients to the waterways, but there are instances in which humans can minimize their anthropogenic influence. For instance, it is beneficial not to allow grass clippings to decay in a waterway. The other process, atmospheric deposition, occurs when nitrogen and phosphorus are "deposited directly to land and water through rainfall and particulate deposition" (7).

2.2.6b Watershed processes on the east side of Lake Winnipeg

Most of this background chapter has focused on how the prairies to the south and west of Lake Winnipeg have been significantly altered in recent centuries, leading to increases in nutrient loading from such watershed processes as erosion and fertilizers. However, the land to

the east of Lake Winnipeg, which is predominantly boreal forest, is relatively pristine. While there are already some anthropocentric sources of nutrients coming from the east side, such as from pulp and paper mills, from erosion due to logging activities or from activities in the thirty-four communities on the east side (e.g. sewage disposal), the land is much less altered than elsewhere in the watershed. That said, there are numerous proposed and planned projects and activities on the east side of the lake which could add more nutrients.

The developments of potential significance for water quality include plans for an all-weather road along the east side of the lake;[22] road-enabled activities including increased logging human habitation and mineral exploration; already existing forestry and logging operations, and the possibility of their expansion; and the possibility of a hydro line along the east side.[23] All of these developments could increase erosion, sedimentation and vegetation removal and, thus, contribute to eutrophication. There is also a proposal to make a large section of the east side a UNESCO world heritage site, an idea that conflicts somewhat with other development activities and plans, but that may better preserve and even celebrate the ecological value of the ecosystem.

Rarely, in either academic or popular literature, have these proposed developments been linked to nutrient loading to Lake Winnipeg. Rather, environmental discussions focus more on the ecological integrity of the boreal forest, the effects development could have on sensitive plants and animals and the effects, both positive and negative, on the largely First Nations communities on the east side (CMC Consultants Inc. 2007; Dillon Consulting 2000; East Side Planning Initiative 2004; Kives 2003; National Round Table on the Environment and Economy 2005; Schindler 2008; Turenne 2008). A report by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (2002) does tie the development into logging and forestry when it notes: "As logging accelerates in the watershed, erosion and nutrient influx to the lake will increase" (14).

Canadian water scientist, Dr. David Schindler, tied eutrophication concerns into his commentary on how development of pristine areas can lead to ecological problems. In a 2008 *Winnipeg Free Press* Op-Ed piece, he compared potential development on the east side of Lake

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[22] It should be noted that an all-weather road is not as contentious as the other concerns, as the frequent failure of winter roads on the east side has resulted in problems such as isolation, high costs of food and dangerous driving conditions resulting in deaths (Dillon Consulting 2000; Paul 2007; Paul & Sanders 2002). Civil society members opposed to the other developments are more apt to offer support to the all-weather road if "done properly" [Dillon Consulting 2000, 42]).

[23] At the time of this thesis, the ruling New Democratic Party had committed to building the power line on the west side of the province, thereby disturbing less of the boreal forest. However, the opposition Conservatives are opposed to this decision, prefer the eastern route and frequently raise the issue.

Winnipeg with developments in the lower foothills and plains of Alberta that were unspoiled before 1960. He discusses how introduction of a major hydro transmission corridor on the East side could open up a Pandora's Box of development:

> One power line might not seem like a big deal. But it becomes a magnet for other sorts of developments and disturbances of many kinds…[the section of Alberta], too, was considered wilderness in the 1960s, with abundant woodland caribou, boreal grizzlies and other large mammals. That changed rapidly with the discovery of oil and gas. Once a few…roads were in place, other activities quickly followed, including mineral exploration, agriculture and powered recreation.

He describes that the lakes are now "ringed with summer homes, which have caused accelerating eutrophication…" (A11).

Aside from these few mentions, there seems to be little to no discussion on the nutrient-loading effects that could result from the development of an all-weather road and the possible construction of a high-voltage power line through the East side forest. These activities could increase nutrient loading from watershed processes; however, very little literature exists to support this claim.

2.2.7 Loss of wetlands

Another factor in nutrient loading is the loss of wetlands in the Lake Winnipeg watershed. One of the many ecological services provided by wetlands is the filtering of water and removal of nutrients (Ducks Unlimited Canada 2008; Edwards 2007; Venema 2007a ; Wiebe 2008). Macdonald (2009) refers to them as "nature's kidneys" (38). A study led by Ducks Unlimited Canada found that 70% of wetlands in southwestern Manitoba[24] were degraded or lost, resulting in a "31% increase in nitrogen and phosphorus load from the watershed," among other effects (Ducks Unlimited 2008, 2). The study suggests that between 1968 and 2001, wetland loss has resulted in "phosphorus loading of 114 tonnes per year to Lake Winnipeg, equivalent to 6% of the total annual phosphorus load into Lake Winnipeg each year from all Manitoba human-related sources including agriculture and point source pollution…" (3).

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[24] It should be noted that results were extrapolated to estimate the loss in all of southwestern Manitoba from a smaller area, known at the Broughton's Creek Watershed (Ducks Unlimited Canada 2008).

One of the main reasons for the loss of wetlands is the draining of marshes for farmland (Voora & Venema 2008; Wiebe 2008). In addition, the health of existing marshes has been compromised by other factors. Of particular note is the health of Netley-Libau Marsh, located at the mouth of the Red River where it flows into Lake Winnipeg. In 2005, researchers found that the marsh was losing its ability to filter nutrients. While the exact reasons for this change are not fully understood, the researchers point to control by Manitoba Hydro of Lake Winnipeg's water levels[25] (which does not allow water levels in the marsh to become low enough to stimulate vegetative growth); an artificial channel cut through the marsh; and the introduction of common carp, which harm vegetation (Fallding 2005a; Grosshans, Wrubleski & Goldsborough 2004). One result has been an increase in open water, from 35% of the marsh in 1979 to approximately 50% in 2001. The authors conclude "Netley-Libau Marsh resembles a shallow turbid lake more than a healthy coastal wetland. Any benefits to Lake Winnipeg which the marsh could provide…in removal and storing of nutrients…have probably been degraded or lost" (4).

There have been numerous studies in recent years about how the protection and restoration of wetlands benefit watersheds. Many of these studies consider not only water filtration and nutrient removal, but also other ecological goods and services, such as carbon sequestration, habitat, flood control, erosion control and cost savings compared to having to provide the same services using human technologies such as wastewater treatment plants (Costanza et al. 2007; Ducks Unlimited 2008; Edwards 2007; Olewiler 2004; Venema 2007a; Voora & Venema 2008; Yang et al. 2008).

Several studies have placed monetary values on these goods and services. One study found that the loss of wetlands in southwestern Manitoba has resulted in the loss of $15 million worth of nutrient removal and carbon sequestration annually, an amount that is projected to increase to $19 million if current human activities continue (Ducks Unlimited Canada 2008).

Olewiler (2004) also found the ecosystem services provided by wetlands to be valuable. In her study of the Upper Assiniboine River Basin, located in east-central Saskatchewan and western Manitoba, she found that agricultural land left in its natural state (e.g. prairie, wetland, forest) could be worth an estimated $65 per hectare due to various ecosystems services, including the improvement of water quality. She concludes that some lands would provide more benefit to society if left in their natural states, rather than being cultivated for profit.

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[25] Manitoba Hydro controls water levels to increase the amount of power it can generate at dams.

In their study of the Souris, Red and Assiniboine watersheds in southern Manitoba, Voora and Venema (2008) considered three possible scenarios to measure ecosystem service values prior to human settlement. These scenarios were a wetland-dominant landscape (20% wetlands); a forest-dominant landscape (9% wetlands); or a prairie-dominant landscape (6% wetlands). They estimated that the land under study, 5.7 million hectares, or "6% of the Lake Winnipeg watershed" (19), would have provided between $500 million and $3.02 billion (Canadian 2007 dollars) per year prior to human settlement, depending on the scenario. Part of the calculated ecosystem service values derived from nutrient removal and the filtering of water. By comparison, the current, settled landscape, with 3.9% wetlands, was estimated to provide between $330 million and $1.30 billion (Canadian 2007 dollars) per year. The wetland-dominant scenario provided the highest amount of ecosystem services amongst the three pre-settlement scenarios – between $1.23 billion and $3.02 billion per year (Canadian 2007 dollars).

Numerous stakeholders have expressed their views regarding what steps should be taken to protect and restore the watershed's wetlands. Recommendations include incentives for landowners, legislated protection and public outreach (Ducks Unlimited Canada 2008; Grant 2008). International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) associate, Bryan Oborne, writes:

> Wetland preservation and/or restoration should form a significant portion of any integrated watershed management or source protection plan. Enshrining the protection of existing wetlands and creatively encouraging the restoration of lost wetlands should also be a fundamental component of the new Manitoba water protection act (2004a).

While the IISD generally does not push for specific policies, it researches possibilities. For instance, Dr. Henry David Venema, Director of Sustainable Natural Resources Management, put forward the option of creating "a series of dikes, canals and weirs" in the Netley-Libau marsh to uptake nutrients (Fallding 2004a, A3). Furthermore, the IISD is studying an innovative way to help fund the project – harvesting marsh plants for biofuels (Fallding 2004a; IISD 2008; IISD 2006; Venema 2007a). Harvesting of growth could optimize nutrient uptake. This research is just part of what the IISD's Water Innovation Centre calls Integrated Water Resources Management, a management approach that engages watershed stakeholders and considers a full range of the ecological goods and services the watershed can provide. Under this approach, biofuels would be considered a good, and nutrient uptake a service.

In 2006, the provincially-appointed Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board recommended that the province explore the use of engineered [human-made] wetlands to treat wastewater, study the ability of wetlands to remove nutrients, take steps to preserve existing wetlands and find ways to share the costs of wetland preservation by all residents.

There is evidence that the Manitoba Government is heeding some of these recommendations; in recent years, the province has implemented various programs to protect and enhance wetlands. For instance, in 2008 the province created the Wetland Restoration Incentive Program in partnership with Ducks Unlimited Canada and the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation, which pays farmers to restore wetlands and has participants sign a Conservation Agreement[26] that the restoration is in perpetuity (Manitoba Water Stewardship n.d.d; Owen 2008). The federal and provincial governments have also provided support for a pilot project called Alternative Land Use Services (known as ALUS) that pays farmers and landowners for the ecological goods and services their land provides. For instance, farmers receive $15 per acre of wetlands that they agree to leave intact with no agricultural usage (Government of Manitoba 2008b; Government of Manitoba 2005; Keystone Agricultural Producers n.d.).

2.3 Climate change and its effects on water quality

Climate change underscores the importance of reducing nutrient loading to Lake Winnipeg. Runnalls (2007) writes that "As climate change proceeds, the [Lake Winnipeg's] temperature, pH, and oxygen levels are expected to be altered." Academic literature suggests that a warmer climate is likely to result in an exacerbation of current Lake Winnipeg water problems, including that of algal blooms, by producing conditions favourable to blue-green algae (Kling et al. 2002; Salki 2007; Stainton, Turner & Page 2003).

Changes in river flows due to climate change could alter the quality of water entering Lake Winnipeg. Diminished glacier melt will result in lower flows from the Saskatchewan River, which runs into Lake Winnipeg from the west (Rollason 2007a; Russell 2006; Salki 2007; Warkentin 2007). Water from the Saskatchewan River is relatively low in nutrients,[27] contributing 4% of phosphorus loading and 8% of nitrogen loading, thereby diluting the more

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[26] "Conservation Agreements are voluntary legal agreements between a landowner and a conservation agency that provide long-term protection of habitat but do not interfere with activities on the landowner's more productive agricultural lands" (Manitoba Water Stewardship n.d.d).
[27] By comparison, the Red River contributes 54% of phosphorus and 30% of nitrogen, and the Winnipeg River 11% of phosphorus and 18% of nitrogen (Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board 2006).

nutrient-rich water of the Red and Winnipeg Rivers (Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board 2006, 29). While inflow from the Saskatchewan River will decrease, flows from the Red and Winnipeg Rivers could increase due to changes in precipitation patterns (Rollason 2007a). The Lake Winnipeg Research Consortium (2008) reports: "If Red River flow variability increases with global warming, as predicted by regional climate models, it will become increasingly important to strictly manage phosphorus and water in the Red River basin if we hope to achieve improvement in Lake Winnipeg water quality" (6).

Part of the increase in nutrient loading could be due to extreme weather events, particularly floods and droughts (Warkentin 2007). Droughts could lead to increased soil erosion from agricultural lands (Sauchyn & Kulshreshtha 2008; Venema 2007b); without adaptive steps such as vegetative buffers, soil that is already vulnerable to erosion could be even more prone to enter waterways. The effects of sedimentation and erosion on Lake Winnipeg are discussed in section 2.2.6.

Changes within Lake Winnipeg due to climate change will likely further aggravate eutrophication. Blue-green cyanophyte algae thrive in warm water temperatures, the exact conditions likely to occur due to climate change (Cornacchia 2006; Fallding 2005b; Rollason 2007a; Salki 2007).[28] Already, the water of Lake Winnipeg has warmed; since 1909, the temperature of water in August in the Southern Basin has warmed by 1.9 degrees Celsius, and in the Northern basin by 1 degree Celsius (Runnalls 2007; Salki 2007). Salki (2007) predicts that water temperatures could further increase by three to six degrees Celsius by 2085 due to climate change. Such an increase would not bode well for the health of the lake, particularly if nutrient loading is not abated. Cyanophyte algae is expected to increase (Salki 2007).

Runnalls (2007) stresses the particular exposure of Lake Winnipeg to the effects of climate change, writing:

> Climate is the single most important factor controlling biodiversity and the distribution of aquatic organisms in Canadian lakes. This finding is true for Lake Winnipeg, which is more vulnerable than other lakes to a warming climate because of its relative shallowness and a lack of thermal refuge for cold water fish…Each action upstream affects Lake Winnipeg and every attempt to limit nutrient loading or pollution of the rivers and

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[28] Already, changes in phytoplankton communities have been observed (Kling, Stainton & McCullough 2004; Kling et al. 2002; Kling 1998).

streams leading into Lake Winnipeg will help the lake heal and adapt to climate change concerns in the future.

2.4 *E. coli*

Perhaps even more present on Lake Winnipeg beach-goers minds than algae could be the possibility of *E. coli* in the bathing water, because the government publishes *E. coli* bacteria numbers and posts warning signs on beaches.[29] Starting in 2003, government water tests found unsafe levels of *E. coli* bacteria in the water every year, prompting them to post signs on popular beaches. Unsafe levels are those that exceed 200 *E. coli* bacteria per 100 millilitres of water. In Lake Winnipeg, the highest recorded level was 6,010 at Gimli Beach on July 18, 2005 (Rollason 2007b). Prior to 2003, the last warnings had occurred in 1993 (Williamson et al. 2004).

When the *E. coli* outbreaks first began, the "usual culprits" of human wastewater and sewage spills, as well as farm runoff, were investigated (Williamson et al. 2004; *Winnipeg Free Press* 2004). However, no clear link was found. Then, in 2003, Manitoba Water Stewardship examined the DNA of the *E. coli* to determine its sources and made an unexpected finding: 8.5 to 12.9% of bacteria were definitely from ring-billed gulls and terns, and scientists suspected that a significant portion of the 73 to 83% of DNA identified as "animal" was also from these birds (Williamson et al. 2004). Tests in 2004 confirmed this hypothesis; DNA testing showed that approximately half of the *E. coli* bacteria were from seagulls (45.73%) and geese (4.88%). Other sources were horses (5.49%), cattle (1.83%), humans (0.61%),[30] "a mixture of dogs, horses and seagulls" (7.32%) and unidentified sources (34%) (Rabson 2005).

Several other surprising findings were made. There appears to be a pattern where high winds, high water levels and/or large waves lead to higher *E. coli* readings. This finding has allowed government officials to offer some predictions about when bacteria counts may be high. It is believed that the waves wash bacteria out of the sand into the bathing water, and that the bacteria survive in the beach sand for long periods of time.

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[29] "*Escherichia coli* or *E. coli* are bacteria found in large numbers in all warm-blooded animals including humans, livestock, wildlife, and birds. *Escherichia coli* itself does not generally cause illness, but when it is present in large numbers, the risk of becoming ill from other organisms is elevated. The most common illnesses contracted by bathers are infections of the eyes, ears, nose, and throat as well as stomach upsets." (Manitoba Water Stewardship n.d.f)

[30] The 2003 tests found that approximately 8% of *E. coli* bacteria were from humans. This difference does not appear to have been discussed anywhere in academic or governmental literature.

2.5 Garrison Diversion

One watershed concern that has received periodic political and media attention since the 1960s has been effects of the proposed Garrison Diversion, an initiative to supply North Dakota with adequate water for its future (U.S. Department of the Interior 1976). The initial proposal in 1965 was to divert water from the Missouri River into the Red and Souris Rivers and, thus, into the Hudson Bay drainage basin. These two drainage basins have been separated for 10,000 years and, as a result, have significantly different flora and fauna communities. For instance, zebra mussels exist in the Missouri River, but have not yet entered the Hudson Bay watershed (Government of Canada n.d.). Other concerns studied by the U.S. Department of the Interior in 1976 included changes in nitrate levels, phosphates, biological oxygen demand, temperature and flood levels, among other things. The study found that nitrates and phosphorus, in particular, might increase in the Souris River.

The Garrison project has gone through many reincarnations, the most recent of which was initiated by the Dakota Water Resources Act of 2000. This Act weakened some compromises made in favour of Manitoba in the 1986 Garrison Diversion Reformulation Act; for instance, unlike the 1986 Act, the 2000 Act does not seriously consider 1977 recommendations by the International Joint Commission that recommended against the diversion unless water quality issues could be resolved between Canada and the U.S. (Government of Canada n.d.). The issue was revived again in 2006, when a report issued by North Dakota on alternatives being considered by the state – with one option being to dismiss the project – indicated the state preferred to "move water from the Missouri River through more than 190 kilometres of pipeline to the Sheyenne River, which joins the Red River near Fargo" (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 2006b).

2.6 Devils Lake

Another project that raises similar concerns as the Garrison Diversion is the more recent Devils Lake diversion. A wet period in the 1990s caused the waters of Devils Lake, North Dakota, to rise and inundate 300 homes in the town of Devils Lake and to flood farmland (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 2005). Devils Lake is a closed lake with no outlet; there has been no flow out of the lake for an estimated 1,800 years, at which point it did flow into the Sheyenne River (Government of Manitoba n.d.). In response to the high 1990s water levels, the

State proposed an outlet to the Sheyenne, and proponents have argued that the project is logical, as they claim the Lake would naturally overflow into the Sheyenne in the near future. However, this premise may be untrue; one prediction is that "there is less than a 0.2% chance that Devils Lake water levels would overflow naturally into the Sheyenne River between now and the year 2045" (Manitoba Water Stewardship n.d.e). Rather, water levels are expected to decline naturally, because the area entered a state of mild drought in the 2000s.

Despite these expectations of a natural and free solution, North Dakota spent $28 million on a State "temporary outlet" that bypassed the need for an Environmental Impact Statement (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 2006b; Manitoba Water Stewardship n.d.e).[31] The outlet began operation on August 15, 2005, but was closed down after ten days because sulphate levels in the Sheyenne River exceeded allowed standards (Samyn 2005). The outlet was not allowed to operate in 2006, and operated for only 38 days in 2007 (Government of Manitoba 2008c). As of February 2008, it had lowered water levels by 0.027 of an inch, "about the thickness of a few sheets of paper stacked together" (Government of Manitoba 2008c). In 2009, North Dakota suggested it increase water output by 1.5 times, a proposal that would require approval from various U.S. federal departments and that Manitoba, among other stakeholders, opposes until an adequate filter is installed (Welch 2009).

Many have opposed the project, including the governments of Manitoba, Minnesota, Missouri, a number of U.S. Indian Reservations, The Great Lakes Commission, a variety of independent scientists, and numerous environmental groups, including People to Save the Sheyenne River, the National Wildlife Federation, the Peterson Coulee Outlet Association and Friends of the Earth Canada (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 2005; Government of Manitoba 2008c; Rabson 2008). Concerns include not only sulphate levels, but also salts, arsenic, boron, mercury, phosphorus, nitrogen and the possible introduction of non-native organisms (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 2005; Government of Canada n.d.; Government of Manitoba n.d.; People to Save the Sheyenne n.d.; Russell 2004b). The Government of Manitoba argues that many of these problems could violate the Boundary Waters Treaty, which says "waters flowing across the boundary shall not be polluted on either side to the injury of health or property on the other side" (International Joint Commission n.d.a). Studies have shown

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[31]Had the State pursued the Federal version of an outlet, an Environmental Impact Statement would have been required because Federal funds would have been used. The proposed Federal outlet would have had more advanced filtration and protection.

that, due to the outlet, total dissolved solids in the Red River could rise above IJC standards for total dissolved solids by 20 to 33% at the U.S. – Canada border – a potential violation of the Treaty (Government of Manitoba n.d.).

An even stronger concern links back to the Garrison Diversion and the possibility that in future times of drought, North Dakota may actually wish to increase Devils Lake levels via an inlet from the Missouri, thereby unnaturally joining the watersheds (Government of Canada n.d.; Lehr 2005; Russell 2004b). Related concerns were discussed in section 2.5.

2.7 Summary

This chapter has outlined the various nutrient inputs and related issues and events that have precipitated concern amongst politicians, scientists, the news media, civil society groups and Manitoban residents about the health of Lake Winnipeg. With the exception of the sections on the Garrison Diversion and Devils Lake, discussion focused on inputs from within Manitoba. However, the reader should be aware that more than 50% of nutrient loading to the lake comes from outside of Manitoba, namely from the portions of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota and Montana that are within the Lake Winnipeg watershed. This "bigger picture" should be kept in mind when considering the current state and potential future of Lake Winnipeg. Stopping and reversing the trend of Lake Winnipeg eutrophication require not only legal and behavioural changes within Manitoba, but also with changes outside of its provincial boundaries, and cooperation and communication among the many stakeholders in the watershed.

There are many contributors to Lake Winnipeg nutrient loading, including agricultural activities, municipal wastewater, industrial activities, cosmetic fertilizers, dishwasher detergents, watershed processes (natural and anthropogenic) and the loss of wetlands and natural areas. While some nutrient inputs can fairly easily be curtailed – for instance by restricting use of cosmetic fertilizers– others are more complicated. Of particular note, the economies of the provinces and states in the watershed are highly reliant on agriculture. There is no question about whether or not agricultural activities will continue in the watershed. They will. The discussion of agriculture in Manitoba illustrates that regulatory and voluntary changes within the agricultural industry are already occurring and that will reduce the nutrient loading effects of these land uses.

Since widespread recognition in the late 1990s that Lake Winnipeg was in trouble, change has begun within Manitoba, and beyond its borders. The Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board final report (2006), with its subtitle, *Our Collective Responsibility and Commitment to Action,* highlights a vital concept: that Lake Winnipeg is dependent on all of its watershed's 6.6 million human inhabitants for its health. One way in which these citizens can learn about actions they can take, and participate in discussions about actions, is through the news media. This thesis will explore the extent to which the *Winnipeg Free Press* allowed for comment and discussion from a variety of interests on the water quality topics that were outlined in this chapter.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

3.0 Introduction

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has. - Margaret Mead, qtd. in Kielburger & Kielburger 2002, 54

As described in Chapter 2, the issue of Lake Winnipeg nutrient loading is a complex one, with a multitude of contributors to decreased water quality. Virtually everyone in the watershed contributes in some way to the problem, and for Lake Winnipeg to have the best chance at nutrient level stabilization and reversal, virtually everyone must be involved in the solutions.

Since the remedy requires commitment from everyone, the situation calls for participatory democracy and good governance, the first topics discussed in this literature review (section 3.1). A significant contributor to the process of good governance is the involvement of civil society, which includes both voluntary and non-profit organizations, as well as individual citizens committed to making a difference. Moreover, the news media are a critical venue through which civil society and other stakeholders can communicate their perspectives to a wider audience. Communication, such as that through the media, is key to the smooth workings of participatory democracy and good governance. Section 3.3 of this chapter defines civil society and its relationship with the news media, and section 3.4 outlines factors that limit civil society in Canada from communicating with the public via the news media. Section 3.5 considers academic literature about civil society experiences and successes in accessing the news media, both in Canada and elsewhere. Section 3.6 provides academic background information on the measurements of source prominence that will be taken in the content analysis of this thesis; where possible, examples related to civil society are provided.

Sections 3.1 through 3.6 provide the foundation for the topic discussed in section 3.7: the possible need for a change in journalism's approaches to sources. The earlier sections describe how some news sources, termed "elite" sources, enjoy better access to the news media than do the civil society sources that are the main interest of this thesis. Given that good governance requires citizens to have clear and complete information on topics of concern (e.g. Lake Winnipeg pollution), and that the news media are a nexus between knowledge and society, the highlighting of some voices and the subduing of others is a concern. One type of "reform

movement" journalism is discussed, public journalism, in which civil society is attributed greater prominence.

Finally, section 3.8 intertwines the concepts discussed throughout the chapter, to explore interactions between and among governance, civil society and the news media, and build a framework that suggests each must be fully functioning and unfettered for a healthy and strong democracy.

3.1 Democracy and Governance

As was explained in Chapter 2, the Lake Winnipeg watershed is vast, encompassing land in four Canadian provinces and four American states. As such, the policies of the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario and the states of Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota all have bearing on the quality of Lake Winnipeg water. In addition to these regional political entities, every municipal entity in the watershed makes decisions that affect the quality of water that eventually flows into the Lake; for instance, in Canada, while the provinces have the power to regulate wastewater, the decisions regarding wastewater treatment are usually passed on to municipal governments (Brooks & Miljan 2003). The Canadian federal government, too, has relevant powers under the Constitution, including "some specific aspects of environmental protection"[32] and "international water management"[33] (265). Therefore, it is obvious that there are already many potential decision-makers to contend with Lake Winnipeg pollution. According to common democratic theory, these municipal, provincial/state, and national levels of government act for the citizens who voted them into power through the representative governmental system that is central to modern democracy. Therefore, the citizens have, in theory, a voice in choosing their elected representatives. These politicians decide policy for their constituents because, as advocates of representative democratic systems reason, most political constituencies (municipal, provincial or national) in the modern day are too large in geographic scale and population to reasonably allow for every citizen's input (Barber 2003). This view harmonizes with the definition of democracy provided by Merriam-Webster (2008): "a

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[32] This jurisdiction is relevant in that the Federal government is able to charge polluters under its water-related laws, as Environment Canada did through the Fisheries Act in 2002 when a malfunction at a City of Winnipeg sewage treatment plant caused raw sewage to enter the Red River (Zubrycki 2008).

[33] This jurisdiction is relevant because the Red River, a major tributary of Lake Winnipeg, flows through the United States before it reaches Canada. Therefore, in matters dealing with the United States, the federal government has some jurisdiction.

government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through a system of representation usually involving periodically held free elections." In the case described above, the power exercised by citizens is generally indirect.

In reality, policy-making is much more complex than elected representatives making decisions based truly on their constituencies' desires. Many other factors influence policy-making. Howlett and Ramesh (2003) refer to the set of influences as "policy networks," "policy communities" or "policy subsystems" (16). Each of these networks has actors, which have varying degrees of power and influence. These include state actors, both elected and appointed, and societal/political actors, which include business, labour (unions), civil society groups, think tanks and research organizations, the media, political parties, and the public.

Appointed actors are, collectively, the bureaucracy, and play a major role in the creation and implementation of policy. Write Howlett and Ramesh, "…the reality of modern government is such that their role goes well beyond what one would expect of a [civil] 'servant.' Indeed, bureaucrats are very often the keystone in the policy process and the central figures in many policy subsystems" (68). The authors do note that the political executive is "ultimately responsible" for the policies, but explain that government has become so complex and the tasks required of government so numerous that it is not realistic for elected officials to carry them out single-handedly.

Business is generally considered the most influential actor outside of elected or bureaucratic government (Brooks & Miljan 2003; Howlett & Ramesh 2003). Business organizations make many socially and ecologically significant decisions within their own realms of action, and also influence government decision-making. While there are many groups vying for the ear of government, Howlett and Ramesh write that "among interest groups, business is generally the most powerful, with an unmatched capacity to affect public policy" (71). In the case of Lake Winnipeg water quality, examples of key business and industry actors would be the hog industry, largely through the Manitoba Pork Council, and other agricultural interests, represented in part by Keystone Agricultural Producers. Each lobbies the Manitoba government, conducting such activities as "meeting with politicians [and] commenting on legislation" (Owen & Welch 2008, B2). The chambers of commerce of Manitoba's towns and cities also lobby on provincial and municipal levels.

Other groups, including the civil society groups consulted with for this research, may have less financial clout than business interests, but they also play a significant role in democracy. They are sometimes invited into the policy process due to specialized knowledge they have cultivated. They may also request to meet with government to inform them of their group's perspectives. Charities with an interest in water may be included in this category, though it must be noted that charities are restricted in their ability to lobby for policy change, as is discussed in section 3.4.1. This thesis focuses primarily on groups with an interest in water quality which are considered part of civil society. Such groups are numerous, including the Lake Winnipeg Research Consortium, the Manitoba Water Caucus, the Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Citizens for the Responsible Application of Phosphorus, Hog Watch, Manitoba Wildlands, Save Our Lake and many more.

Think tanks and research organizations have also found a considerable role in the formation of public policy on Lake Winnipeg water quality. James (1993) defines a think tank as "an independent organization engaged in multidisciplinary research intended to influence public policy" (as cited in Howlett & Ramesh 2003, 78). The think tank perhaps most involved in Lake Winnipeg research is the IISD, which created a Water Innovation Centre in 2009, of which the Lake Winnipeg watershed is a major focus. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives has also taken some interest in water quality (e.g. Dolecki 2007; Pryzner & Dolecki 2004). Howlett and Ramesh also place university academics in this category of influence, though they note that the direct goal of university work is not always to influence public policy.

Howlett and Ramesh also include the mass media as an "intermediating actor," though they note that different academics attribute varying amounts of importance to the media as a factor in the policy process. They explain: "The role of the media in the policy process originates in the fact that in reporting problems they function both as passive reporters and as active analysts, as well as advocates of particular policy situations" (82). This thesis will help illuminate how one member of Manitoba's mass media, the daily newspaper the *Winnipeg Free Press*, reports on Lake Winnipeg water quality.

Howlett and Ramesh write of liberal democracies today: "Surprising as it may appear, the 'public' plays a rather small direct role in the public policy process" (74). This comment aligns with the description of public input earlier in this section. In addition to voting, Howlett and

Ramesh suggest public input is exerted through public opinion, though they also note that the links between public opinion and policy outcomes are disputed.

Barber (2003, 1998), who favours a more participatory alternative to contemporary representative democracy, concedes that the concept of representative government is logical and likely preferable to other modes of government that the world has seen so far (e.g. dictatorships). However, he and other authors (Chomsky 2002; Nylen 2003; Roussopoiulos & Benello 2005) argue that, in current practice, democracy often does not adequately consult with the people who are meant to steer it. They do not, in fact, have "supreme power." Numerous authors lament that, for most people, voting is their most significant political act and, as Barber (2003) puts it: "voting…is already the least significant act of citizenship in a democracy" (187). He emphasizes the essentially anti-social nature of voting in the following description:

> …our primary electoral act, voting, is rather like using a public toilet: we wait in line with a crowd in order to close ourselves up in a small compartment where we can relieve ourselves in solitude and in privacy of our burden, pull a lever, and then, yielding to the next in line, go silently home. Because our vote is secret – 'private' – we do not need to explain or justify it to others (or, indeed, to ourselves) in a fashion that would require us to think publicly or politically. (188)

While some of these voters may have informed themselves about the political candidates via various forms of news media, political brochures or perhaps even by attending political debates, the process does appear to be rather non-participatory. Some opportunities for participation may exist in the electoral process, for instance through meetings with candidates when they go door-to-door, attending question and answer sessions or writing letters to the editor. Unfortunately, such levels of citizen political involvement are the exception, not the norm. Moreover, the reduction of participation in democracy to the simple act of voting does not correspond with the etymology of the word democracy itself: *demos*, the Greek word for "common people" and *kratos* or *kratia* for "power," "rule" or "strength" (Harper n.d.). Cartledge (2001) translates it to mean, literally, "people power." A poll of voter preferences once every four years hardly empowers people, and is not as significant as ongoing participation.

3.1.1 What is Governance?

Given the low involvement of most citizens in Canadian democracy, the concept of governance, which is more inclusive of the public, needs to be considered. First, it is important to

distinguish between *government* and *governance*; they do not denote the same thing (Callway 2005; Hall 2005; Ivanova 2005; Rhodes 1996), as governance goes further beyond elected political actors. Writes Hall (2005): "Governance...is a more inclusive government than government *per se*, embracing the relationship between a society and its government" (112). Similarly, Goldsmith and Eggers (2004) describe how democracy is shifting, in some nations, from "governing by hierarchy" to "governing by network" (as cited in Kupcu 2005, 91). Mborogi and Chigudu (1999), too, note the broadening of democracy: "Twenty years ago most people thought that governance was the sole responsibility of the State and its institutions. Today, it is widely recognized that a healthy, flourishing democracy requires 'good governance' – a process that is more inclusive, participatory, transparent, accountable, and responsive than in the past" (111).

Other authors similarly stress the *network* aspect of governance (Painter 2001; Rhodes 1996). Painter (2001) writes that governance engages "…a wide range of institutions and actors [stakeholders] in the production of policy outcomes. These stakeholders include non-government organizations (NGOs), quasi-non governmental organizations (QUANGOS),[34] private companies, pressure groups and social movements, as well as those state institutions traditionally regarded as formally part of government" (Painter 2001, 317, as cited in Pollock & Lerner 2008). Kooiman (1993) also emphasizes the strength in having participatory decision making: "No single actor, public or private, has all the knowledge and information required to solve complex, dynamic and diversified problems" (as qtd. in Rhodes 1996, 657).

Also of interest to this thesis is a definition of "water governance,"[35] provided by Hall (2005). Writing from a similar network perspective as the above authors, he offers: "The concept of water governanc*e* relates here to government policies and actions related to water, encompassing laws, regulations and institutions; but it also relates to networks of influence, including international market forces, the private sector and civil society. It embraces both the formal and the informal institutions by which authority is exercised" (112).

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[34] QUANGOS stands for "quasi-autonomous NGOs" (Howlett & Ramesh 2003, 107). They are a type of public-private partnership, often organized by government but retaining some autonomy, that have some level of input into policy matters, often in the form of consultative advice. Sometimes, their purpose is to provide services, rather than advice.

[35] Hall (2005) writes more from an international and developing world perspective than the Lake Winnipeg case study. However, a definition of governance specifically related to water is still useful.

Further distinction should be made about types of governance. This thesis explores how civil society organizations, as well as ordinary citizens, affect governance via the news media. Some models of governance may exclude citizens as part of the process. The concepts of "democratic governance" or "participatory governance" are, therefore, of great interest, because they are rooted in a governance model that is most inclusive of citizens. Malena (2006) writes of participatory governance:

> Around the world, citizens suffer from a lack of adequate information, lack of awareness and acknowledgement of human and citizen rights and inadequate opportunities for meaningful dialogue and negotiation with public actors... There is now growing consensus that good governance is participatory governance. Both governments and citizens/civil society have a crucial role to play in promoting good governance…Participatory governance requires building trust between civil society and the state and establishing working relationships with (various levels of) government actors. (102).

This model of governance clearly lays out a role for citizens in the governance process, and a growing body of literature discusses its development. A considerable amount of this literature is on environmental or watershed-based topics (e.g. Geissel 2009; Kearney et al. 2007; Sneddon & Fox 2007).

As this thesis will further explore, the news media can play a role in remedying this "lack of adequate information" by increasing citizens' abilities to participate. As will be discussed in section 3.7 the media have potential (and some would argue, responsibility) to strengthen the ability of both individual citizens and of civil society organizations to engage with their governments in governance.

3.1.2 What does good governance mean for status quo democracy?

Governance has different implications for different varieties of democracy. In status quo representative democracy, with which Barber (2003, 1998) and Chomsky (2002) are so dissatisfied, governance may have considerable power inequities. Certain interests, often defined by (largely financial) resources, have more influence. In general, civil society groups, the actors on which this thesis focuses, are similarly more likely to influence policy-making if they have more resources, a situation described in more detail in section 3.4. Barber (2003) calls this type of democracy "thin democracy," and describes how, in this situation, strong networks between organizations and citizens for the purpose of policy discussion are not encouraged. In many such

democracies, "The citizen is a citizen exclusively by virtue of his relationship to the government, of which he is both author and subject. His relations with his fellow citizens are entirely private and have nothing of the civic about them" (220). The roles of discussion, talk, deliberation, idea-sharing and participation between and among non-governmental people are minimized. Chomsky (2002) echoes this unfortunate state of affairs in his discussion of the "spectator democracy" in which, he suggests, those who are not elected officials or bureaucrats or influential lobbyists are part of a "bewildered herd"[36] whose function "is to be 'spectators,' not participants in action" (17).

Since networks, interactions and negotiations among multiple stakeholders, governmental and non-governmental, are integral to good governance, it is evident that "thin democracy" does not adequately encompass the idea. Accordingly, the framework that is developed at the end of this chapter will recognize that governance, civil society and media can be linked in a positive relationship that benefits society.

In response to thin democracy, Barber (2003) proposes "strong democracy," which he defines as "Politics in the participatory mode where conflict is resolved…through a participatory process of ongoing, proximate self-legislation and the creation of a political community capable of transforming dependent, private individuals into free citizens and partial and private interests into public goods" (132). This model of democracy is more in line with the concepts of governance described in the previous section.[37] It engages the civil society actors that are the main interest of this study.

Barber's strong democracy is inspired by ideas from historical figures such as Theodore Roosevelt, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Aristotle, all of whom spoke of the wisdom of the people. Roosevelt,[38] for example, suggested that: "The majority of the plain people will day in and day out make fewer mistakes in governing themselves than any smaller body of men will make in

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[36] The idea of the "bewildered herd" was actually introduced by Lippmann (1921).

[37] It should be noted that Barber also discusses the idea of altogether eliminating the representative system of government. This is not the view taken by this thesis. However, he also writes about the possibility that participatory institutions complementary to representative institutions can be created, thereby not eliminating representative democracy entirely, but altering it to allow for more citizen input. In fact, he admits that it is not realistic to expect a sudden switch from representative democracy to purely participatory, direct democracy.

[38] Even though this thesis is in a Canadian context, some American information will be used. Here, the discussion is about the concept of democracy (rather than the workings of democracy specifically in Canada), and numerous American figures have spoken compellingly on the topic; their quotes are, therefore, appropriate to illustrate the concept.

trying to govern them" (151).[39] Another American politician, Thomas Jefferson, said: "I know of no safe depository of the ultimate power of the society but the people themselves, and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion" (Barber xxxvii). As I will argue in this thesis, the news media have considerable potential to inform citizen discretion.

Strong democracy requires that participants listen to each other, and thoughtfully evaluate each others' views. This, too, is reflective of governance.

> The participatory process of self-legislation that characterizes strong democracy attempts to balance adversary politics by nourishing the mutualistic art of listening. 'I will listen' means to the strong democrat not that I will scan my adversary's position for weaknesses…It means, rather, 'I will put myself in his place, I will try to understand, I will strain to hear what makes us alike, I will listen for a common rhetoric evocative of a common purpose or a common good. (Barber 2003, 175)

Strong democracy, in which participants thoughtfully consider each other's views, could be particularly beneficial to the Lake Winnipeg situation, in which a sort of "blame game" has occurred, with few contributors to nutrient loading feeling disposed to take responsibility. Rather, finger-pointing has been a common practice. Citizens blame agriculture for its contribution, while farmers point out that citizens have sewage systems that pollute. Some people argue that approximately 50% of the nutrients come from outside of Manitoba, and so neighbouring states and provinces need to increase their efforts, while others suggest Manitoba should set an example of water stewardship. A review by this author of the situation over the last decade suggests many participants have found it difficult, or have been unwilling to try, to understand others' perspectives. It is possible that the news media, with their penchant for controversy, have not been helpful in encouraging solutions and commonalities.

Strong democracy expects citizens to be participants in the decision-making process at least some of the time. Barber recognizes that there are some time, energy and interest constraints to citizens' abilities to be involved, and so does not insist that they dedicate themselves fully to all political issues; however, he does not allow them to be passive followers, allowing decisions to be passed on their behalf by a small number of elected leaders. He cites American Eugene Debs to illustrate how leadership can diminish capacity for "self-government and thus for self-cure"; Debs wrote: "Too long have the workers of the world waited for some

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[39] Barber points out that a similar assertion is made by Niccolo Machiavelli in *The Prince*, in which he expresses "that the multitude will on the whole be as wise or even wiser than princes…"

Moses to lead them out of bondage. He has not come; he will never come. I would not lead you out if I could; for *if you could be led out, you could be led back again"* (as cited in Barber 2003, 242). Barber, however, is not only concerned with the state of workers (Debs' activities were focused on labour unions and movements), but with the participation of society in all affairs. For the purposes of this thesis, Debs' statement could be rephrased as "if you could be led out of polluting Lake Winnipeg, you could be led back again." In this light, the need for citizens to become involved in the discourse about Lake Winnipeg pollution, to understand the nature of and reasons for its problems and to be involved in decision-making and remedial action becomes more clear. If decision making is carried out without informed and meaningful citizen input, if most discourse and debate on the topic is "behind the scenes", citizens may not realize why it is important that treatment at their sewage plant be upgraded, or why changes are being mandated in farming practices, or even notice the fact that the formulation of their dishwasher detergent has changed. Without enlightenment on these matters, citizens who have good but uninformed intentions could be led by one-sided claims (e.g. that the previous administration "wasted" money by upgrading sewage infrastructure, or does not care about farmers' incomes) to elect into office a party that would reverse policies currently being considered or passed that would aid the Lake. The role of media in informing citizens and giving them a voice will be discussed later in this chapter.

The problem of agenda-setting by political leaders of any stripe should also be noted. Barber argues that citizens should be key in setting the agenda of a government, that their informed perspectives should lead their government into action. He scrutinizes an environmental topic, urban transportation, from this viewpoint in the following example:

> In liberal democracies, agendas are typically regarded as the province of elites – of committees, or executive officers, or (even) pollsters…Yet a people that does not set its own agenda, by means of talk and direct political exchange, not only relinquishes a vital power of government but also exposes its remaining powers of deliberation and decision to ongoing subversion. What counts as an 'issue' or a 'problem' and how such issues or problems are formulated may to a large extent predetermine what decisions are reached. For example, the choice between building a small freeway and a twelve-lane interstate highway in lower Manhattan may seem of little moment to those who prefer to solve the problems of urban transportation with mass rail transit. (180-181)

In the case of Lake Winnipeg, proposals to spend more than one billion dollars upgrading shared sewage infrastructure may seem unsatisfactory to citizens who would like to consider

options such as composting toilets for all residents[40] or managed wetlands. Whether or not the current state of "thin democracy" governance allows for such possibilities to be raised is one of the uncertainties pointing to needs for a more informed and participative approach to deliberation and decision-making.

3.2 Governance and Civil Society

Closely linked with the concept of participatory governance is civil society, for it is civil society that constitutes one of the key categories of participants in strong democracy. As described below, civil society is a contested term but, in essence, it consists of the voluntary sector (e.g. non-profit organizations, non-governmental organizations, charities), as well as individuals working for societal change as engaged citizens.

3.2.1 What is civil society?

The 2006 Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board report was sub-titled: "Our Collective Responsibility and Commitment to Action." The invocation of collective responsibility meshes well with an argument of this dissertation: that the solution to Lake Winnipeg pollution lies in engagement of everyone and every entity within the watershed, be they public or private, governmental or non-governmental. This thesis further suggests that the media are one way to foster engagement.

Civil society has undergone nearly constant redefinition; much like the popular phrase "sustainable development," it has been shaped so many times for so many purposes that some critics suggest the concept: "amounts to nothing but two misguided nonsense words" (Keane 1998, 53). However, the continued debate on its definition, and its widespread use and acceptance (in various interpretations) by a wide variety of organizations and academics, suggests that it is an attractive and useful concept.

The most common view is that civil society is a collective noun, generally "synonymous with the voluntary sector (or the Third Sector), and particularly with advocacy groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), social movement agents, human rights organizations and other actors explicitly involved in 'change work'" (15). Hopkinson (2001) quite similarly defines civil

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[40] The author would like to thank Vivek Voora, who brought up this possibility during an informal conversation in 2007.

society as including entities from "formally chartered nongovernmental organizations (NGOS) and labour and business associations, to more informal community-based organizations, people's organizations, clubs and networks" (1).

Individuals who are engaged in the Lake Winnipeg pollution issue are inherently involved in work for change; while they may not be formally tied to a "change work" group, they are also considered part of civil society in this thesis.

Also similar to the above definitions, Barber (1998) sees civil society as one of three influential sectors in society, the other two sectors being the State and private sector. Barber argues that civil society exists as a "mediating third realm" between the State and private sector, and that none of these three sectors needs to be absolutely opposed to another, but that, rather, they can work together for governance.

Van Rooy (1998b) explains that, today, civil society is variably viewed as a value, a collective noun, "a space for action", a historical moment, and an anti-state concept. This thesis will focus on civil society groups with an interest in Lake Winnipeg water quality that are neither governmental nor businesses. They will include registered charities, registered nonprofits and grassroots organizations with no registered status. In addition, individuals who participate in discussions about Lake Winnipeg water quality through forums such as letters to the editor will be included in this research.

The contemporary concepts of civil society were developed from earlier perspectives constructed by thinkers such as Adam Ferguson, Adam Smith, Thomas Paine, Karl Marx, G. W. F. Hegel, Alexis de Tocqueville and Antonio Gramsci.[41]

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[41] Ferguson worried that rising standards of living were leading to a less active citizenry, and that "their devotion to the pleasures and refinements of civilization threw into doubt their willingness to unite in common cause in defense of their liberties" (Edwards & Foley 2001, 2). For him, the "civility" of civil society – that is, being polite – was a focus (Van Rooy 1998b, 8). Hegel, too, worried about this outcome of capitalism, and argued that intervention by the State could ensure that values such as civility and morality did not fall victim to the market (Van Rooy 1998b; Shils 2003). De Tocqueville argued against such strong involvement of the State, writing about the voluntary associations of the United States and suggesting that these groups were a way people could transcend the selfishness and individualism that may come with capitalism (Hyden 1998; Van Rooy 1998b; Whittington 2001). In fact, he makes the argument that civil society is "society's ultimate, and best, defense against tyranny by the State" (Van Rooy 1998a, 8). Antonio Gramsci was even more concerned about state dominance, and wrote in the early 20th century about civil society in terms of hegemony, the domination of the State or a group, over the rest of society; therefore, his perspective focused on "counter-hegemonic" and revolutionary action (Edwards & Foley 2001, xix). Civil society to him was "an alternative to the existing political and economic order" (2).

While there is no one clearly accepted definition of civil society, Van Rooy writes, "most visions of civil society are not necessarily incompatible with each other" (28) and the available literature broadly support the following defining characteristics of civil society:

- It is a force in society that is separate from both the government and private business. However, especially in relation to governance, it can work and ideally *will* work cooperatively with these two other sectors (provided that the other two sectors also cooperate).

- Most commonly, it consists of groups who form formal or informal associations. However, even individuals not directly associated with a group are part of civil society when they raise their voice, for instance through the media, to argue for what they see as the "common good."

- It is pluralistic, allowing for multiple views among groups and individuals within civil society's whole.

- It is usually associated with democracy, although some scholars have made arguments for the existence of civil society in non-democratic states.

- There is a normative expectation in civil society that excludes groups that do not demonstrate civic values and democratic practices that include "tolerance, inclusion, non-violence, commitment to promoting the public good, and so on" (Naidoo & Tandon 1998, 13).[42]

In this dissertation, I assert that, despite the criticisms, civil society is valuable to consider and is a force in our society that can provide useful ideas about how to improve society and, furthermore, that the media can be a valuable vehicle through which to share these ideas.

3.2.2 What role does civil society play in governance and democracy in Canada?

Unlike government, civil society does not create law; however, every citizen is potentially a civil society member if he or she wishes to become engaged in democracy in a more meaningful way than simply voting and placing election signs on his or her lawn. He or she can

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[42] For instance, Naidoo and Tandon (1998) argue that the Ku Klux Clan and the Mafia cannot be members of civil society, even if all other characteristics, such as not being affiliated with government, are met. Swift (1999) similarly insists that a values test must be placed on civil society or else accepted members could include "fascists, terrorists, racketeers [and] criminal elements as well as individuals committed to democracy…" (6).

influence law, as well as public opinion. This engagement can often be through joining a group which works on the citizen's area of interest; citizens interested in Lake Winnipeg water quality can join and support a range of groups, such as Save Our Lake, the Manitoba Water Caucus or the one of the many "concerned ratepayer" groups that formed in municipalities in Manitoba when the hog industry was expanding.

Unlike the private sector, civil society does not seek a profit. Both registered charities and registered nonprofits must abide by rules about their financing. Grassroots, non-registered groups are limited in their ability to acquire funding (e.g. grants) and, therefore, often have even fewer financial resources. Rather than profit, the raisons d'être of civil society groups with an interest in Lake Winnipeg water quality are, depending on the group, to increase public understanding of water issues (e.g. Manitoba Water Caucus), acquire information to inform public knowledge and political decision-making (e.g. Lake Winnipeg Research Consortium) and/or influence government policy (e.g. Manitoba Hogwatch).

Therefore, it is appropriate to identify civil society as a "mediating third realm" between government and business. Industry groups, such as the Manitoba Pork Council, have every right to communicate with the government about their desires for policy on Lake Winnipeg water quality management. Not surprisingly, industry often does so from a profit standpoint. The Manitoba Pork Council will lobby government on behalf of what is best for the hog industry. When civil society communicates with government, it may take a broader view than one particular sector of society, such as farmers. Depending on the group, its motivations may be, for instance, the "public good," human health, ethics, sustainability or ecosystem health. It offers perspectives that are markedly different from those of government or business, which may be quite profit-driven. Civil society groups can temper short-term profit-based perspectives from industry lobbyists with longer-term, sustainability-based perspectives. Civil society voices are invaluable in the governance process for, just as business and industry interests have many perspectives on a topic, civil society also offers a range of knowledge and views. Taken together, the input of these many voices has the potential to create stronger public policy.

Throughout Canada, governments have recognized, at least in theory, the importance of civil society in the governance process. In 1999, the federal and provincial governments created the Social Union Framework Agreement (SUFA), an attempt to enable deliberative democracy which made commitments to "engaging citizens in the governing process" at both levels of

government (Phillips 2001, 8). However, in her analysis in the year the Framework was expiring (2001), Phillips concluded that the governments had not fulfilled their commitments to engage citizens and that SUFA had only limited success (e.g. increased government reporting on policy outcomes). Some governments had also developed "more positive relationships with citizens and the voluntary sector" (28). However, she observed that *most* progress came from "bottom-up" movements, in which civil society demanded a greater voice in governance; these changes came less out of the Social Union Framework Agreement, and more from civil society itself. She writes; "Independent of government, the voluntary sector has, in many cities and provinces, begun to coalesce and play a leadership role…If civil society continues to organize and to develop its leadership capabilities, governments will find it increasingly difficult to ignore voluntary organizations and to walk away from their commitments to citizen engagement" (29).

Phillips again wrote about governance in Canada in 2006. She explains of the ideals behind change:

> Shared governance entails collaboration among a wide range of actors from the public, private and voluntary sectors, and a transformation of the state's role from one of exercising direct control and operating through hierarchies to one of working through networks…The citizenship regime should encourage citizens and civil society organizations to identify themselves as and develop their capacity to participate as political actors in policy development" (3).

Her analysis shows that other countries, such as the United Kingdom, have more successfully reconfigured relationships between government and civil society to encourage deliberative governance. She points to several specific problems for civil society engagement in governance, including restrictive and possibly unreasonable "accountability" rules on the voluntary sector in order for them to obtain public funding and a view that the voluntary sector exists primarily to "provide services," not to contribute to policy. She writes of Canadian progress: "…Canada has not evolved as far towards models of shared governance involving the voluntary sector in policy development as many other countries have done…The voluntary sector has a key role to play in the process. But Canada has yet to realize the potential of shared governance" (27-28).

In short, literature on civil society in Canada suggests that civil society's access to governance, in terms of public policy input, is still not adequate and equal to that enjoyed by other interests (e.g. business). Ayres (2004) argues that, in Canada, civil society has few "sustainable links to state power." (622).

In the Lake Winnipeg situation, there have been several attempts at civil society (i.e. the voluntary sector) involvement in Lake Winnipeg governance. Particularly notable is the aforementioned Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board. There are also other instances of public engagement. Civil society presented at various Manitoba Clean Environment Commission hearings on topics related to Lake Winnipeg water quality, such as the expansion of the Red River Floodway (which could bring increased sediment into the river) and the sustainability of the hog industry (Manitoba Clean Environment Commission 2005, 2007). Additionally, the provincial government has held public consultations on numerous occasions, for instance before it formed policy on cosmetic fertilizers (Manitoba Water Stewardship 2007). Individual citizens and citizen groups could provide their perspectives at these consultations. It is outside the scope of this thesis to measure the effectiveness of these processes for Lake Winnipeg governance. While it is promising that such public inputs existed, this thesis focuses more on the potential of the news media to complement official governance mechanisms (such as consultations), and to provide an alternative for input when these mechanisms are weak.

3.3 Civil society and the news media

When civil society has limited access to contribute to governance, it has all the more reason to engage the news media in order to disseminate its message to the public. This section will discuss many of the ways in which civil society can engage the news media, from the use of public relations tools (e.g. news releases) to writing pieces such as letters to the editor and Op-Ed submissions. Academic literature on civil society usage of these options will also be discussed.

3.3.1 Why should civil society organizations attempt to access the news media?

The most common incentive cited to engage the media is that it allows an organization to reach a large audience; many more people can be reached through a single newspaper article that addresses a group's message in a major daily newspaper than with other public outreach possibilities, such as face-to-face interactions or public meetings. While the organization will not have full control over the substance of the news article (unless the newspaper chooses to publish a news release verbatim), information from the organization will still be highly accessible to a good cross-section of the public. Other reasons cited for why organizations should seek out news coverage include the opportunity to increase awareness of the organization, the possibility of

increasing membership and donations or other funding due to this increased awareness, the chance to inform the public of the organization's issues, and even to affect public policy (Deacon 1996).

Much of the popular literature on how to reach out to and through the media emphasizes the need to create a communication strategy or plan, rather than simply creating communications materials as discrete items whenever the need arises (Feinglass 2005; Goldenberg 1975; Kome 1989; Radtke 1998; Rogers 1995; Sussman 2007). Levine (1998) writes "publicity is not a spur-of-the-moment profession. It takes thinking and planning, often months in advance of a campaign or promotion, if not years. The problem is, many people fail to plan a carefully laid out map to success" (78). In particular, the need for goals and objectives for the short, medium and long-term are highlighted by various authors (Goldenberg 1975; Levine 1998; Radkte 1998; Rogers 1995). Radtke (1998) defines a goal as "the end result your organization wants to achieve" and objectives as quantitative and qualitative "chunks" of each goal, or how the organization will achieve the goal. For instance, a Lake Winnipeg water quality organization's long-term goal might be to increase public understanding and concern about agricultural sources of nutrients in the Lake Winnipeg watershed. Its immediate objectives to reach that goal could include producing twelve news releases each year, holding one press conference in a two year period, being the topic of six articles in a major daily newspaper (either the *Winnipeg Free Press* or the *Winnipeg Sun*), writing one Op-Ed piece for a daily newspaper over a two-year period, convincing at least one weekly newspaper to allow it to run regular guest columns on the issue, and hosting a joint public event with another Lake Winnipeg water quality group.

The sections below describe in more detail the communications tools that can be used by civil society organizations, and discuss academic literature about the experiences of organizations in using these tools to access the media.

3.3.2 How civil society accesses the media

There is considerable literature on how journalists select sources, and what factors play into source selection. As explained in section 3.6.1, numerous content analysis studies have shown that the voices of civil society actors are usually diminished in favour of "traditional" sources, such as governmental and business ones. There is considerably less academic literature on the process through which civil society sources deliberately try to access the press (though

non-academic books on how to access the press abound), and the success of these measures. This section will discuss the academic literature that does exist and outline the various ways in which civil society organizations can seek a voice in the news media.

The over-arching academic literature for this area is that of agenda-building. Agenda-building is an extension of McCombs and Shaw's (1972) concept of agenda-setting, which is how the news media influences public opinion and public policy. Agenda-building focuses more on the *process* of news creation, rather than the *effects* of it. Of greatest interest to this thesis, it considers how news sources contribute to the news agenda through media outreach (Driedger 2008; McCombs 1992; Tanner 2002).[43] A significant body of literature explores how (mostly "elite") sources access the media and the outcomes they achieve (Huckins 1999; Kiousis & Wu 2008; Kiousis, Popescu & Mitrook 2007; Kiousis et al. 2006; Sallot & Johnson 2006; Sweetster & Brown 2008; Yoon 2005). In general, the literature supports the idea that the use of traditional public relations tools, such as news releases, background documents and news conferences increases access by sources to the news agenda (e.g. Kiousis, Mitrook, Wu & Seltzer 2006; Len-Rios et al. 2009; Sweetster & Brown 2008). Gandy (1982) calls such materials "information subsidies," a term adopted by numerous other academics. Some of the literature also suggests that the use of public relations tools may increase the legitimacy of the sources in the eyes of journalists (Len-Rios et al. 2009; Yoon 2005). In addition, studies find that agenda-building efforts may lead to more positive or favourable depictions of the groups that carry out the agenda-building (Kiousis & Wu 2008; Sweetster & Brown 2008).

The literature suggests that the creation of these materials is quite critical if a source wishes to access and influence the news agenda. These attempts can be very successful. Studies suggest that public relations materials and practitioners contribute in some way to between 44 and 80% of news, depending on such factors as the topic area and publication type (Cameron, Sallot, & Curtin, 1997; Lee & Solomon 1990; McManus 1994; Sallot & Johnson 2006). For instance, Schwitzer (1992) suggests that public relations efforts by hospitals, physicians, and medical product manufacturers drive health-related reporting, at least in the United States, so

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[43] Other aspects of agenda-building include how the news products of one news media affects news production in other media. For instance, morning newspapers often influence the stories of evening news broadcasts; therefore, a story in the *Winnipeg Free Press* on a water quality topic (e.g. sewage spill event) could lead the CBC to also cover that spill in its evening news. A third aspect of agenda-building stems from journalists' own perceptions, attitudes and norms, including the "values and traditions into which every journalist is socialized" (McCombs 1992).

much so that he sounds a note of caution about giving them too much access to the news agenda; this information is not always unbiased, he suggests. Tanner (2002) summarizes this perspective: "it's not necessarily the best or most accurate health information that is released by the media to the public, but the information that is packaged and marketed in the best manner" (31). No estimate could be found for how much scientific or environmental news coverage is dependent on public relations materials such as news releases. A health-related example was given, since both environmental and health news are generally quite complex. Schwitzer (1992) suggests one reason journalists are so reliant on public relations materials for health news coverage is that the topics are complex. Therefore, it is possible that topic complexity increases media use of public relations materials for environmental coverage, as well.

If the packaging and marketing of public relations materials is, indeed, a major factor in source success in agenda-building, then the usage of these materials by civil society groups with an interest in Lake Winnipeg water quality is of interest to this research.

3.3.2.1 Communications tools and outreach techniques

A survey of non-academic books on the "how to" of running civil society organizations indicates that information subsidies are seen as important elements of most civil society outreach plans (Bryant 1991; Goldenberg 1975; Kielburger & Kielburger 2002; Kome 1989; May 2006; Pick 1993; Radtke 1998; Rogers 1995; Seo 2001; Sussman 2007). The structure of these products (news releases, news conferences, background documents, media briefings etc.) is the same, whether the party in question is a civil society organization, an industry group or a government. Therefore, this section will not detail how to write these materials effectively, but rather why it is important for civil society organizations to devote some energy to preparing professional pieces.

The popular literature on environmental groups indicates that some are reticent to engage the news media (Kome 1989; May 2006; Radtke 1998). Radtke (1998) quotes Margaret E. Mahoney, a former president of the Commonwealth Fund, a foundation that supports access to health care in the industrialized world, who observed: "Too few of those who perform or finance the work that could improve society are alert to the transforming effect of communications…as an institution dedicated to improving mankind's condition, [we] need to attach greater importance to the art of communicating" (xi). Reasons for this hesitancy include the fear of being

"spun" or misquoted, apprehension about being in the public eye and past experiences of being "ignored" by the media (i.e. demoralization). However, these books urge groups to overcome any hesitations and use the media to their advantage (while also providing tips at reducing the risk of being "spun," improving confidence and increasing the chances the media will attend to the group's story).

A less tangible outreach tool is requesting meetings with editorial boards, the so-called "gatekeepers" of the news media. The popular literature on civil society outreach also highlights this possibility (Levine 1998; May 2006; Pick 1993; Salzman 2003). Reasons for such meetings include explaining the importance of an organization's issue(s) to the editors, making them aware of the organization's perspective on an issue (and hoping the newspaper's editorial stance might shift closer to the group's perspective), increasing editor knowledge of a group's issue(s) in the hope that the newspaper's coverage might reflect this information and presenting proposals and ideas for news topics.

Finally, an organization can pursue connections with journalists, particularly those who are most likely to report on the organization's issue(s). If a strong, cordial relationship can be fostered, the organization may enjoy easier access to the news (Levine 1998; May 2006; Pick 1993). Levine (1998) calls this approach developing a "working friendship" and offers that it can be kindled by responding to journalists as quickly as possible, providing them with information pertinent to their news beats (even if the information tip will not immediately get the organization into the news), and even having an occasional lunch with the journalist to get to build a relationship. Explains Pick (1993): "After a while, your local reporters will know to call you whenever a story affects your neighbourhood or your cause. You will gain the advantage of always getting your point of view expressed in their articles." (62)

3.3.2.2 *Access through letters to the editor*

The letters to the editor section of a newspaper can be the most accessible section for civil society, particularly for individual citizens but also for organizations and groups (Pick 1993; Salzman 2003). The section also enjoys high readership (Forsythe 1950; Levine 1998; Nader & Gold 1988; Salzman 2003). There has been considerable debate in academic literature, however, about the actual value of this section to society and democracy.

A large portion of the literature focuses on the potential benefits of letters to the editor. Many authors focus on the section's potential service as a public forum for debate and information provision (Burkett, Harral & Perskie 2001; Gregory & Hutchins 2004; Hynds 1992; Kapoor & Botan 1992; Wahl-jorgenson 2004). Perrin and Vaisey (2008) assert that in the face of a decline of citizen participation in communities, in civic organizations (i.e. the decline of social capital, as popularized by Putnam 2000, 1996) and in face-to-face forums for debate, letters can help sustain the public sphere.[44] Others suggest that letters are useful in setting newspapers' agendas, alerting editors to which topics concern readers the most (Hynds 1992; Raeymaeckers 2005). Several authors even assert that letters to the editor are essential to the vitality of newspapers, as they help form relationships with readers (Cole 1992; Hynds 1992).

Negative aspects of letters to the editor are also observed by academics. The perception that letter writers are "cranks" and "eccentrics" is noted by many authors, though most of these authors dispute this stereotype with their research (Buell 1975; Wahl-jorgenson 2002; Volgy et al. 1977). Numerous studies found that those letters selected for publication by editors do not represent the population and, as such, cannot be seen as an inclusive debate that serves democracy adequately (Ericson, Baranek & Chan 1989; Forsythe 1950; Grey & Brown 1970; Nader & Gold 1988; Wahl-jorgenson 2002; Wahl-jorgensen 2001). No author could measure whether or not the entirety of letters *submitted* (but not necessarily published) represented the population, since that would require access to all letters submitted. Forsythe's 1950 study, one of the earliest available, found that (published) letter writers were older, predominantly male, conservative-minded, well-educated, almost always Caucasian and had resided in the area for a long period of time (143). Later studies showed that some of these demographics were changing – for instance, the genders were represented more equally (Hynds 1992) – but that the general population was still not represented. For instance, some studies observed that letters that conformed to the perspective of the newspaper in question seem to be favoured, thereby skewing the chances of the section being representative of the general population (Grey & Brown 1970; Richardson & Franklin 2004; Wahl-jorgensen 2001). Of particular interest to this study is the possibility that "activists" might not have their perspectives heard due to such editorial bias.

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[44] The "public sphere" is a concept developed by German philosopher, Jürgen Habermas, that permeates a great deal of communications literature. The public sphere "refers to institutions through which citizens deliberate about the common good to hold government accountable, or the 'realm of social life where the exchange of information and views on questions of common concern can take place so that public opinion can be formed'." (Dahlgren 1995, as cited in Wahl-jorgensen 2007, 11).

Wahl-jorgensen (2001) found that "editors give privilege to individual expression over the expression of activist groups and that they prefer the emotionally charged stories of individuals," and suggested that such selection is problematic to democracy, particularly if rational and deliberative information is suppressed. Grey and Brown (1970) also suggested that some groups were over-represented in letters to the editor, and other groups had their views stifled. However, their focus was not on civil society, specifically. Only one study found that the letter to the editor section of a newspaper was reflective of the overall public; in their study of letters about a public vote that defeated the Martin Luther King holiday in Arizona, Sigelman and Walkosz (1992) found the letters to be fairly representative of public opinion.

It is worth noting that not all letters submitted to newspapers are published. Nader and Gold (1988) report that between 2 and 15% of letters submitted to major American newspapers are published. They suggest that, unless researchers could study all letters received, it is difficult to determine whether or not letters submitted are representative of the population and whether or not editors are selecting with bias. The only study that could be found in which researchers had access to all letters submitted was by Ericson, Baranek & Chan (1989). Of particular interest were the statistics provided about the frequency of acceptance of letters from different types of organizations. Private non-profits, of greatest interest to this research, had an acceptance rate of 50%. Government saw higher acceptance rates, at 70% for federal government writers and 66.6% for provincial government writers. Private corporations, also of interest to this thesis, had acceptance rates similar to those of non-profits, at 51.9%. Non-affiliated individuals had much lower acceptance rates than these groups, at 27%.

It is also notable that in the 1980s and 1990s, letters to the editor appeared to be increasing at most newspapers (Kapoor 1995; Nader & Gold 1988); almost 80% of newspapers surveyed by Kapoor reported either a "slight" or a "substantial" increase in letters over a decade. This increase could indicate a growing interest amongst citizens in participating in public debate. Alternatively, it could stem from other factors, such as the decline in the number of newspapers to which to write letters. Unfortunately, no studies could be found on letter to the editor trends beyond 1995.

Many "how to" guides for civil society and advocacy organizations assume that letters to the editor are, indeed, valuable and, as such, encourage that civil society take advantage of this newspaper section (Kielburger & Kielburger 2002; Kome 1989; Levine 1998; May 2006; Pick

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1993; Rogers 1995; Salzman 2003). May (2006) points to such benefits as the chance to "persuade more people of the rightness of your cause," the ability to reach politicians, who generally keep track of articles and letters pertinent to their portfolios, and to alert the newspaper itself to the importance of the issue (75).

3.3.2.3 *Access through the Op-Ed pages*

There is also space in the paper dedicated to more detailed views, the Op-Ed pages (typically located opposite the editorial page), in the paper. For instance, the *Winnipeg Free Press* publishes a section called "View from The West," which has included the topic of Lake Winnipeg water quality numerous times. Op-Ed pieces are written by individuals who are not newspaper staff, including civil society representatives, industry representatives, politicians, academics and independent experts. Clow and Machum (1993) describe such articles as "'think pieces' reflecting the opinions and judgements of an academic or other author" (41).

Numerous "how to" books on how civil society can reach out through the media refer to Op-Ed pieces as a valuable way to inform the public (Clow & Machum 1993; May 2006; Radtke 1998; Seo 2001). Other guides do not touch on this possibility (e.g. Bryant 1991; Goldenberg 1975; Kielburger & Kielburger 2002; Kome 1989). Therefore, popular literature on civil society seems to emphasize letters to the editor more than Op-Ed pieces as ways to access the news.

Seo (2001) seems to downplay the option, writing: "It's difficult to get an editorial printed but worth a try if your writing skills are in pretty good shape" (46). Presumably, the difficulty in getting Op-Eds published could be a reason why other publications do not emphasize Op-Eds as an outreach strategy.

May (2006) does see great value in them, though she recognizes it can be difficult to have them accepted for publication. She says they are "one of the most effective ways to make your case. Unlike a media interview, you control exactly how your message appears…" (77). She suggests that advantages of Op-Ed pieces include their longer lengths compared to letters (perhaps 800 words instead of 200), the fact that this length allows one to develop a more cogent argument than in a letter, and the fact that the piece ends with a brief biography with the writer's credentials.

Clow and Machum (1993) emphasize the importance of Op-Ed pieces for news balance, given that "elite" voices, such as government and industry, tend to dominate the "hard news" (as

discussed in section 3.6.1). In their study of nuclear power coverage in the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star*, they write: "The domination of news by pro-nuclear sources puts a heavy burden on the small number of features, news analysis and columns for serious debate about nuclear power." However, their analysis of guest columns found that these pieces, likewise, were dominated by perspectives "overtly supportive" of the nuclear industry, and that little "debate" existed (57). Their sample of *Globe and Mail* opinion pieces found only one piece written by someone representing the anti-nuclear movement of civil society.

Academic literature on Op-Ed pieces is sparse, a fact noted by the few academics who have studied the topic (e.g. Day & Golan 2005; Song 2004). No literature on Op-Eds in the Canadian media could be found. A significant portion of the existing literature analyzes the contributions of academics to the Op-Eds pages (Calavita & Krumholz 2003; Rowe & Brass 2008; Sommer & Maycroft 2008). Considerably less looks specifically at the ability of civil society to access the Op-Ed pages, with the exception of a few studies. For instance, one of Schiffer's (2006) findings was that activists concerned with the Downing Street Memo controversy[45] were most able to have their voices heard via this section of the newspaper. Civil society has only been included in other academic studies in a more general way; several studies found low writer diversity in the Op-Ed pages, which were instead often dominated by mainstream voices (Day & Golan 2005; Page 1996). By extension, these findings suggest that civil society may not always find a strong voice in the Op-Ed pages, though few of these authors discuss the implications of their findings for civil society specifically. Rather, they point to the broader concerns, for instance that "the lack of diversity [is] inconsistent with the original stated purpose of the Op-Ed as a forum for the articulation of diverse viewpoints on salient issues…" (Day & Golan 2005). Rosenfeld (2000) asserts the need for debate through Op-Eds and diversity of voices, suggesting "[to not do so] is skimping on a newspaper's larger obligation to acknowledge generously the value of a right of reply and of open discourse in a democratic society" (8). Only one study found an adequate diversity of voices and perspectives (Golan & Wanta 2004).

The academic literature suggests that the value in the Op-Ed pages is to inform public debate and broaden understanding (Rosenfeld 2000) and even to enable those with knowledge in

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[45] The Downing Street Memos were "top-secret minutes of a…meeting between British Prime Minister Tony Blair and senior British military and intelligence officials" that discussed the potential of Britain participating in the war in Iraq and the United States' dubious reasons for wishing to start the war (Schiffer 2006).

a policy area to deliberately influence public policy (Calavita & Krumholz 2003; Sommer & Maycroft 2008). Sommer and Maycroft (2008) even suggest, in their discussion of academics writing Op-Eds, that the pieces "are meant to appeal either to policy makers or those who influence them and can have a significant impact upon the policy process, especially for those who stand outside of government" (588). Several scholars on the topic of Op-Eds see them as a vehicle to affect public policy, though none discusses the potential of civil society to do so (unless one considers academics to be part of civil society, which is a possibility).

3.4 Factors limiting civil society organizations in the media

For a news story to include a civil society voice, two factors are absolutely necessary: 1) a journalist who sees a need for that civil society voice in the story and 2) a civil society voice both willing and able to be quoted in the media. Of particular interest to this study are the cases where civil society does not wish to be included in news coverage. Literature reveals several reasons why civil society organizations might shy away from coverage in the media, including charities being concerned about risking their charitable statuses by being perceived as "political," and concerns about losing funding not tied to charitable status.

Section 3.6 discusses source selection by journalists, and the fact that content analyses have found civil society organizations often to be less prominent and common in stories than traditional sources, such as governmental ones. However, it should be noted that this pattern might, in part, be due to civil society's unwillingness to be in the media. In other words, the question, "do civil society organizations have trouble accessing the media" also is accompanied by the question, "do the media have difficulty accessing civil society?" There are various reasons why organizations might choose not to be included in media coverage, and ones most pertinent to this study are discussed below.

3.4.1 Income Tax Act restrictions on registered charities

One topic that bears exploration is the effect that subsection 149.1(6.2) of the federal *Income Tax Act* might have on some organizations' public activities. Most notably, the subsection limits "political activities" of registered charities to between 10% and 20%[46] of the charities' revenues, depending on the size of the charity (Bridge 2004). If a charity violates this

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[46] It was not until 2004 that smaller charities could use up to 20% of their revenue for activities considered "political". Before that, all charities were limited to 10% (Floyd 2003).

subsection, it can be deregistered, thus "losing the ability to issue receipts to donors or to receive funding from charitable foundations" (Floyd 2003, 3). Such funding is the lifeblood of many charities. The Canada Revenue Agency defines a political activity as anything that:[47]

- encourages the public to contact elected representatives or public officials to urge them to retain, oppose, or change any law, policy, or decision in any jurisdiction;
- communicates to the public that the law, policy, or decision of any level of government in any jurisdiction should be retained, opposed, or changed;
- attempts to incite or organize the public to put pressure on elected representatives or public officials to retain, oppose, or change any law, policy, or decision of any level of government in any jurisdiction; or
- attempts to sway public opinion on social issues (Canada Revenue Agency n.d.)

In the early 2000s, The Institute for Media, Policy and Civil Society (IMPACS) drew charities around Canada into discussions about the *Income Tax Act*, and about the wording of the law, and pressed for legislative reform. Wrote IMPACS: "Canada's charities are limited in their ability to participate in public policy debate or to advocate for changes to legislation, regulations, or government policy…This limit on charities has been recognized by many as a serious impediment to modern Canadian democracy, for it limits the voices of charities and the people they serve…" (2002, 1). Surveys carried out by IMPACS indicated that 56.7% of responses "strongly agreed" that change was needed to the law, 26.1% "agreed," 8.4% "somewhat agreed" and only 2.2% "disagreed" or "strongly disagreed."[48] The 490 respondents were from organizations of various sizes and from different locations, and more than two-thirds had charitable status. IMPACS itself also favoured legislative change. This strong indication of dissatisfaction with the law indicates that there may be validity to IMPACS' concern that the restriction may limit the involvement of charities in democracy and governance.

In 2003, partially in response to this initiative, the Canada Revenue Agency created new draft guidelines on the legislation. One of the common complaints about the charity law was that it was "confusing and restrictive" (Bridge 2004). Therefore, part of the Canada Revenue Agency's response focused on providing better definitions and examples of what is and is not considered "political activity." For example, the Canada Revenue Agency "narrowed what [they]

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[47] This definition was obtained in 2009 from the Canada Revenue Agency web site. As this section details, definitions of "political activity" prior to 2003 were not quite as clear.
[48] Also, 6.5% did not respond to the question or indicated "don't know."

consider political activities to no longer include many attempts to inform public opinion on an issue." They also provided illustrative examples of what are and are not political activities.

Of particular concern to this thesis is how the law views media activities. Media activities arise numerous times in the literature on the law. The Canada Revenue Agency specifically discusses media campaigns carried out by charities. Two hypothetical examples provided on the Canada Revenue Agency web site suggest that organizations may be considered to be carrying out political activities if they arrange media campaigns around research they conducted, particularly if the research makes recommenations for changes in laws.[49] It appears from information and examples provided by the Canada Revenue Agency that dissemination of the results of research to the media without an actual media campaign are acceptable as charitable activities, as long as certain restrictions are met (e.g. no call to action is made). Media campaigns can often be acceptable political activities, but the money spent on them must not exceed the prescribed amount of organizational revenues (10-20%).[50] Some civil society organizations feel that this spending restriction is too limiting (Floyd 2003; IMPACS 2002). Chapter 6 of this thesis will discuss the *Income Tax Law*, media campaigns and governance in detail.

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[49] The Canada Revenue Agency provides numerous examples of when activities are and are not political activity. In one, the Canada Revenue Agency explained what was acceptable when a charity representative was stopped by the media after she had given a presentation to Parliament on her organization's findings (the presentation was considered charitable because it was a communication "based on a well-reasoned position.") The Canada Revenue Agency explains how the situation can acceptably unfold as a charitable activity and not a political activity: "…she is stopped by the media and interviewed for television and radio about what she said and the report. She outlines her representation and repeats the conclusion that on the basis of the research the charity has done, the charity thinks that the number of pedestrian deaths involving seniors might be reduced if drivers that failed to recognize the right-of-way of pedestrians at marked crosswalks faced stiffer penalties. This interview is not a political activity because the research director did not arrange a media campaign to publicize the charity's conclusion that the law should be changed; she simply explained what she said to the elected representatives." (Canada Revenue Agency 2003)

[50] The Canada Revenue Agency provides the following example of when an acceptable political activity may occur. Note that the activity still has to fall within the prescribed 10 to 20% of revenues:

A driver that failed to observe the right-of-way at a marked crosswalk accidentally kills three seniors from the same seniors' residence. There is a public outcry about the accident and the safety of marked crosswalks.

The provincial government where the accident occurs reviews its policy on marked crosswalks and holds consultations with stakeholders to get their views on the issue. Healthy Retirement is asked to present its well-reasoned position on the matter. The presentation is a charitable activity because Healthy Retirement is informing elected representatives about its work on an issue that is connected and subordinate to the charity's purposes and based on a well-reasoned position.

However, following its representation, Healthy Retirement concludes that the elected representatives were not enthusiastic about its well-reasoned position that marked crosswalks should be banned. The charity therefore decides to hire a communications specialist to arrange a media campaign to highlight its view that marked crosswalks should be banned. Note that this is not the same as saying that crossing at a crosswalk is four times as dangerous as crossing at a traffic light. From this point onwards, we will view the activity to be a political activity because the media campaign will explicitly communicate to the public that the law should be changed so that crosswalks are banned (Canada Revenue Agency 2003).

The Canada Revenue Agency information is still ambiguous regarding what would happen if a journalist called an organization for comment on a proposed new law; in the case of the Lake Winnipeg watershed, such an occurrence is commonplace. Chapter 6 of this thesis will discuss what ambiguity about the nature (political or charitable) of this type of action (responding to questions from reporters) could mean for charities.

Response to the changes put forth by the government appear not to have fully satisfied many of the organizations that raised issue with the *Income Tax Act*.[51] The Centre for Philanthropy responded that there were some "minor improvements" but also "some significant shortcomings." These shortcomings include: 1) the fact that government response involved not amendments to the law (as many respondents to IMPACS's survey indicated they would prefer) but, rather, interpretations of it based on case law; 2) continued uncertainty as to whether certain activities would be considered charitable or political (particularly that some activities could be deemed political "after the fact"); 3) limitations on how organizations can communicate research findings to the public if these findings suggest that a change in law is called for; 4) the consideration of "calls to action" as political activity (e.g. brochures that encourage the public to contact their Members of Parliament on issues); 5) a requirement that opposing perspectives on an issue be addressed in public communication; and 6) specifications on how messages can be communicated. Specifically, for this sixth point, charities are restricted in their ability to use "emotive" (emotional) messages in communications with the public.

More broadly, some organizations disagree in general with the restriction of political activities to 10-20% of revenues (e.g. IMPACS 2003). Floyd (2003) argues for a change in these restrictions by comparing Canada's laws in this area to those of other commonwealth countries. In most other commonwealth countries, charities do not have their actual *activities* regulated, though their *purposes* must be charitable. In general, there are two main limitations to charities: they cannot "engage in partisan politics" and they cannot be designated a charity if their main purpose is to change or oppose a law (5). England allows political activity as long as it is "in the context of supporting the delivery of its charitable purposes" (Charity Commission 2008). Many charitable activities limited in Canada (e.g. supporting or opposing bills, mobilizing public

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[51] Responses from IMPACS, the organization that spear-headed the dialogue for change, are limited, since IMPACS went into bankruptcy in 2007 (IMPACS 2007). It appears that follow-up studies were not done that could compare data gathered by IMPACS in their 2002 report. While it appears that IMPACS did prepare some response papers, these are no longer available, as IMPACS's web site no longer exists.

opinion on an issue) are allowed in England "so long as a charity is engaging in campaigning or political activity solely in order to further or support its charitable purposes, and there is a reasonable likelihood of it being effective…" (Charity Comission 2008). A media campaign would be acceptable. While political activities must link closely with charitable purposes, the law allows for advocacy to be a "significant contribution" (i.e. more than 10-20%) of a charity's activities.[52]

Scholars Greenberg and Walters (2004) suggest that the restrictions on Canadian charities are "based on an eighteenth century Elizabethan statute about what charitable service should entail"; each charity in Canada must follow one of several stated purposes: "relief of poverty, advancement of education, advancement of religion, and other purposes beneficial to the community" (401). They argue that long overdue redefinition should allow charities to serve an expanded role in the twenty-first century. "If the role of the voluntary sector is indeed becoming more crucial to late modern forms of governance, it would seem to follow that charities and nonprofit associations should be encouraged to have a strong voice in advocating for policies that represent the interests of their members and constituents" (Greenberg & Walters 2004, 401).

3.4.2 Fear of risking other funding

Not all civil society organizations are charities. Dreessen (2000) reports that the exact number of nonprofits that are not registered charities in Canada is not known, but that a 1992 study estimated that there were 175,000 nonprofit corporations in Canada (Quarter 1992, as cited in Dreessen 2000). Clearly, charities are only part of the civil society sector, and non-charities are also important to consider.

The size, funding and purposes of these nonprofits vary widely. Unlike for charities, there are no legal restrictions on their political activities. This fact means that these nonprofits can lobby government and make political statements in the news. Indeed, many do so.[53] An example in Lake Winnipeg civil society is Hogwatch Manitoba. However, there is evidence in literature that some of these organizations are still constrained due to the sources of their funding. Funding for nonprofits that are not charities can come from a variety of sources, including government,

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[52] The U.K. Charity Commission web site discusses political activity in detail at: http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/publications/cc9.asp#24
[53] It should be noted that many nonprofits have no interest in advocacy activities, and their missions would not change, regardless of their funding sources. This thesis, however, focuses on those groups that are interested in media coverage and, in some cases, carry out advocacy.

private donors, businesses, membership fees, foundations (though many foundations fund only groups that have charitable status) and fund-raising events, among others. Of greatest interest to this thesis is how funding, particularly from government sources, could restrain a group's media and advocacy activities.

Young and Everitt (2004) detail the Canadian situation over the last thirty years in terms of governmental funding. Federal government funding of civil society groups grew when Trudeau was prime minister but declined during the Mulroney and Chrétien governments, when "advocacy and political education groups" were specifically targeted for spending cuts (78). These cuts led to the demise of many groups, an indication of the degree to which their very existence was reliant on governmental funding (Embuldeniya 2001; Miller 1998a).

Government funding of civil society still exists at all levels, but Young and Everitt note the quandary of governmental funding: "In some instances, governments can privilege one perspective and virtually silence another. This is a deeply troubling aspect of reliance on state funding for advocacy groups" (79). In essence, if civil society groups rely greatly on governments for funding, these governments can, in essence, control which perspectives can mobilize and which ones cannot. Not surprisingly, governments often prove reluctant to fund groups that will oppose their policies, a tendency that Young and Everitt say is growing. "The federal government has become increasingly unwilling to fund groups that will be critical of it, even though government may benefit from consultation with groups representing the interests and views of stakeholders in a particular policy field" (81). Clearly, this situation may not be in the best interest of participatory democracy.

That said, May (2006) points out that government funding in Canada may not always be problematic. She writes: "Ironically, government funding can be less restrictive than charitable foundation grants. It can often be available to groups that are not registered charities. Government funding can actually make harsher criticism of government possible" (147). Therefore, two Canadian sources on government funding, Young and Everitt (2004) and May (2006) do not entirely agree. Perhaps different governments exercise different levels of "interference" and control over the money they provide to nonprofits. Perhaps the amount of control exerted depends on the non-profit in question. The definitive answer could not be determined in this literature review.

Further literature that is not specific to Canada discusses concerns about how governmental funding can create a conflict of interest if a civil society group wishes to advocate against a policy put forward by the government that is providing funding. Nikolic and Koontz (2008) document how the activities of an environmental advocacy group in Ohio, the Baret River Coalition, were hindered when it partnered with the state government in watershed planning activities. The group almost did not receive funding through the state-run (Ohio Department of Natural Resources and Ohio Environmental Protection Agency) Ohio Watershed Coordinator Grant Program in part due to its advocacy activities,[54] and then experienced some difficulty working with the government, its "historic opponent," when carrying out the program. After a time, the group relinquished the grant, largely due to "recognition…that the program was not consistent with their mission or goals [which included advocacy]" (459).

More generally, numerous scholars have considered the effects of government funding on organization independence (Ferris 1993; Gazley & Brudney 2007; Horne 2006; Miller 1998a; Nikolic & Koontz 2008). Gazley and Brudney (2007) found that loss of independence was one of the most common reasons why groups chose not to collaborate with government. Authors also note other changes that may occur when funding agreements and ties are made with governments, including a tendency to adjust behaviours to be more in line with the priorities of government (Smith 2004). Gazley and Brudney (2007) calls this "mission drift" (392). Smith (2004) explains, ''the opportunities for funding mean that many nonprofit agencies 'adjust' their behavior, including their organizational goals and mission, depending on the priorities of the government funding agencies" (as cited in Nikolic & Koontz 2008, 8).

The literature points to many tensions in efforts of civil society organizations to mobilize for democracy. Section 3.5 explains that funding improves a group's access to the media. However, governments are one of the most common sources of funding for non-charitable groups, and to receive funds from government may mean limiting advocacy (or imperilling those funds). The most lucrative funding opportunities limit an organization's ability to comment on public policy, particularly if it opposes the funders' positions.

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[54] The authors report that "one county Soil and Water Conservation District explicitly expressed opposition to the [the group's] grant request. In the end, [the group] ranked number 21 for a program that would allow 20 grants. When one higher ranked organization turned down the grant, the money went to [the group]" (455).

3.5 How successful is civil society at accessing the news media?

Academic literature on news media uptake of civil society organizations' information is sparse, as noted by the few scholars who have given the subject attention (Greenberg & Walters 2004; Hale 2007; Jacobs & Glass 2002; Martens 1996). A handful of studies do indicate that various factors increase civil society organizations' ability to access the media. Martens (1996) focuses his analysis on the need to make information as newsworthy as possible, drawing journalist attention to how the topic fulfills news values. The definitions of "news values" vary, but they include such characteristics as timeliness, proximity to the reader, consequences to the reader or society, inclusion of celebrities/well-known figures, conflict, human interest, and others (e.g. Anderson 1997, 117-120; McKercher & Cumming 1998, 16-19; Shoemaker & Reese 1996, 110-112). There is some evidence that non-profit stories with higher news values increase access to the media, and are also more likely to be placed prominently (e.g. on page 1) in a newspaper (Corrigan 1990; Martens 1996).

Other studies have looked at organizational factors that appear to be correlated to news coverage. Several studies found that the budget of an organization favourably affects the amount of coverage received (Deacon 1996; Greenberg & Walters 2004; Jacobs & Glass 2002). The authors link these higher budgets to a higher likelihood that the organizations will have communications expertise on staff. Write Greenberg and Walters (2004), who authored the one Canadian study available: "Indeed, in many cases a large budget can be used to hire publicity professionals, generate an information data center [e.g. website], and host events designed to attract attention…" (400). Deacon et al. (1995) report that journalists recognize the professionalism of these organizations, as they were more likely to "appreciate the pressures and demands of the news-gathering process" (131). Jacobs and Glass (2002) explain that "Public relations professionals have the ability to organize information in a way that will make it appear more newsworthy, and to do so within a temporal framework better aligned with the news day" (238). Since public relations practitioners are trained to be attuned to news routines, they can make journalists' jobs easier and, therefore, increase the news coverage of their organization.

Budget and communications expertise appear to be significant factors in news coverage. Another finding in the Canadian study (Greenberg & Walters 2004) was that charitable organizations receive more coverage than non-charitable ones. In addition, the interest areas of organizations are a factor. Several of the available studies consider what type of issues receive

higher coverage. Environmental topics were found to receive lower than average coverage in all studies that measured this variable (Greenberg & Walters 2004; Jacobs & Glass 2002). Greenberg & Walters (2004) report that "those organizations operating within the economic, cultural/sport/leisure, and education/health and human services subsectors tend to fare much better in the news arena than multicultural, social justice, and religious organizations" (401). This study included "environmental" organizations in the "social justice" category. The authors provide further analysis for democracy: "The relative invisibility of these latter types of voluntary groups (and specifically multicultural and social justice) from news reporting is especially troubling given that these organizations often advocate on behalf of the most marginalized individuals and groups in society."

3.6 Source prominence in newspaper articles

Chapter 4 of this thesis involves a content analysis that measures the prominence of different sources in newspaper coverage of Lake Winnipeg nutrient pollution. This inquiry stems from a rhetorical perspective on the structure of written texts. The study of rhetoric is interested in the use of persuasive language (Campbell 1996), which includes the structure of language use. The structure of newspaper articles is an example of a presentation form that can persuade (or at the very least, suggest to)[55] readers that some sources are more important than others.

A key factor is "prominence," which indicates "emphasis or importance" (Webster's 1987, 1352). In his content analysis of citizen sources, Haas (2007) defined "source prominence" as "the number of lines of full quotations and partial quotations/paraphrases" for each source (86). Other scholars use similar definitions (e.g. Stempel & Culbertson 1984; Zoch & Turk 1998), and measure additional characteristics, such as placement near the top or bottom of a story, frequency of source usage and whether a source is directly quoted or paraphrased.

The content analysis of this thesis similarly measures the degree to which sources are emphasized. Specifically, characteristics that are measured in this thesis include the frequency of appearance of source types within articles, the placement of source types within articles (e.g. first source, last source), the number of words attributed to sources, the page numbers on which articles are located, whether sources are paraphrased or directly quoted, and which societal actor

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[55] The article structure might not actually *persuade* all readers that those sources given higher prominence are *actually* more important than those with lower prominence. Readers, of course, make their own interpretations, and may be themselves predisposed to view some source types as more important than others.

"defines" the news (e.g. governmental, non-governmental, business etc.). The assumption in this thesis is that the following contribute to higher prominence of a source: 1) higher frequency in news articles; 2) earlier placement in articles; 3) more words attributed to a source; 4) inclusion in articles on earlier pages; 5) direct quotation rather than paraphrasing; and 6) higher frequency of "defining" news stories.

3.6.1 Source frequency and why elite sources dominate news coverage

The area of source prominence that has received the most study is that of overall source frequency. The prevailing perspective is that government, business, industry and, to a lesser degree, scientists dominate as voices in the news. Other authoritative sources such as legal ones (police, the courts) also may dominate coverage (Raffaele 1993). These sources are often termed "elite" or "traditional" sources. Other types of sources, such as civil society groups and citizens, are "non-elite" or "non-traditional" and are most often accorded less space in the news.

By far the majority of content analyses of news media support this finding. Most often, government appears to dominate news coverage on a range of issues (Berkowitz 1987; Fishman 1980; Gans 1979; Gutstein & Hackett 1998; Jha 2007; Logan, Park & Shin 2004; Sachsman, Simon & Valenti 2002; Seo 1990; Sigal 1973; Sumpter 2007). Significant literature also exists to prove the dominance of industry and business sources in some news stories (Boudreau 2000; Corbett 1998; Goodman & Goodman 2006; Gutstein & Hackett 1998; Hyde 2006), and the dominance of scientists and researchers (Albaek, Christiansen & Togeby 2003; Hyde 2006). This pattern of traditional sources dominating coverage often extends to environmental coverage (Corbett 1998; Goodman & Goodman 2006; Ketchum 2004; Lacy & Coulson 2000; Smith 1993; Taylor, Lee & Davie 2000). Table 3.1 highlights the dominance of traditional sources over non-traditional sources in a selection of content analyses.

In studies of environmental coverage, there are few exceptions to this pattern in analyses of mainstream media.[56] In one of the rare examples, Burch and Harry (2004) found that coverage in four newspapers on the topic of pesticide use provided significant space for "counter-hegemony" views, or those perspectives that run against the perspectives of those in power (the "elite" sources). Unlike in the many studies that indicate traditional source dominance, the non-traditional source category of "activists" represented 39.8% of sources throughout the four

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[56] Indeed, there are few exceptions to this pattern in coverage of any kind of topic, environmental or not.

Table 3.1: Source frequency measurements in existing academic literature

Studies measuring source frequency overall[57]	Government	Business/ Industry	Scientist/ Academia	Civil society Group	Other
Ketchum (2004)	39.4%	22%	NA[58]	28.8%	9.8%
Corbett (1998)	40.4%	19.8%	6%	9.1%	24.7%
Burch & Harry (2004)	24%	22.6%	7.1%	39.8%	6.5%
Studies taking yes/no measurements of sources[59]					
Taylor, Lee & Davie[60] (2000)	81.2%	76%	10.6%	14%	NA
Gutstein & Hackett (1998)	55.6% (51.5%)[61]	20.8% (11.9%)	8.4% (9%)	37.7% (42.7%)	NA

newspapers. Government and industry still had their voices heard, at 24% and 22.6% respectively, but the coverage still did not follow the usual pattern of non-traditional voices being marginalized. In this instance, Burch and Harry concluded that the pattern was, in part, accounted for by the fact that many stories were centred on announcements by activists. Therefore, civil society appears to have driven the coverage of the story and, thus, been the dominant source. Write the authors: "Somewhat less frequently the stories were prompted by release of a government or private-interest-group report on pesticide use" (567).

Some of the available literature does offer insights into why this pattern of elite source dominance persists, despite criticism from academics, the growth of civil society (and, therefore,

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[57] These studies measured frequency of sources over the totality of articles. In other words, they averaged source frequency over the article sample. Therefore, source totals add up to 100%.

[58] Author did not code content analysis for usage of scientists and academics.

[59] These studies measured took yes/no measurements of whether or not a source category was included in newspaper articles. Therefore, totals add up to more than 100%.

[60] The authors did not report the frequency of usage overall, but rather whether or not a type of source was used in each article (n = 442). Therefore, their measurement methodology is significantly different from that of the other articles in the table.

[61] The first measurement is from Gutstein and Hackett's 1997 study. The measurement in parentheses is from his 1988 study. The numbers clearly show an increase in "elite" source usage and decrease in civil society source usage.

the existence of more alternative voices) in many countries, and the rapid increase in information availability that came with the development of the internet and other technologies.

Source selection literature suggests that elite sources remain dominant in part due to their ease of access (Altheide & Snow 1979; Corbett 1998; Sigal 1986; Wright 2007). Writes Boudreau (2000): "Reporters need reliable, predictable sources to produce stories on deadline and at regular intervals." If a source responds to reporters quickly, is familiar with and respectful of news routines, provides materials (e.g. background information) that makes reporters' jobs easier, they are more likely to be sources in the news. Grabe, Zhou and Barnett (1999) explain: "efficiency dictates news gathering through routine channels. Journalists are merely striving to meet deadlines and thereby rely on those news sources who are available for comments" (294). As discussed in section 3.5, factors such as lack of communications personnel and adequate funding may limit civil society availability.

Dominant sources also fall naturally into established journalism routines, such as the "beat system" (Gans 1979; Gitlin 1980; Fishman 1980; Hansen 1991; Tuchman 1978). A journalist working the city hall beat or the legislative beat likely has easier access to many of these municipal and provincial politicians simply due to proximity. For instance, in Manitoba, *Winnipeg Free Press* reporters have offices within the legislative building; politicians are merely a stroll down the hall away. In contrast, more effort is required to find a citizen able to comment on a topic, or to contact a civil society organization with offices elsewhere.

Academic literature supports the idea that when potential sources facilitate access, such as through the usage of news releases, news "backgrounders"[62] and news conferences, they are more likely to receive coverage (Van Dijk 1988). Again, this facilitation relates to fitting with news routines and helping reporters meet deadlines. Grabe, Zhou and Barnett (1999) write: "Government agencies, aware of the time and financial constraints…provid[e] journalists with news releases ready for publication…[and] schedul[e] press conferences with mindful consideration of deadlines" (294). News releases are generally written to resemble news pieces; they follow a journalistic style, including the use of leads and quotations from relevant people (e.g. government officials, if it is a government news release). It is not surprising that journalists

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[62] "Backgrounders" are background documents common in the communications industry. They provide further details on the topics highlighted in news releases.

choose to pursue stories based on news releases. The use by civil society of such public relations materials is discussed in section 3.321.

Credibility of sources, as perceived by journalists, has also been found to play a significant role in source selection (Gandy 1982; Hackett 1985; Hansen 1991; Ketchum 2004; Seo 1990; Stark & Sokolski 1977; Tuchman 1978; Yoon 2005).

Ketchum (2004) provides a more philosophical and ideological reason for elite source dominance. In her study of coverage by the *San Francisco Chronicle* of controversy over the harvest of a redwood forest in California, she argues that the ideological perspectives of journalists more closely resembled those values held by the elite sources of government officials and industry representatives cited in articles, and that this alignment in values affected how sources were used and rhetorically characterized in coverage. These perspectives include the ideas of "responsible capitalism" and "instrumental conceptualization of nature" (i.e. how can we use it; what can we do to it?) (42). Through rhetorical analysis, Ketchum finds evidence that journalists almost never conveyed through articles the perspectives of the most "radical" group involved in the controversy, Earth First!, even though the group brought the issue to public attention. The perspectives of Earth First! focused on the concept of deep ecology (that nature has intrinsic value), a viewpoint outside of mainstream thinking. Rather than using meaningful quotes that illustrated the views held by Earth First! members, journalists usually simplified their positions, depicted them as irrational and, in general, delegitimized them. Ketchum concludes that journalists did not communicate the goals of Earth First!, which includes changing how people perceive nature, because the concept was likely foreign and peculiar to journalists. Elite actors were more likely to have their voices heard, because their views fell within a "rational" framework with which the journalists could identify. Since Earth First! was not seen as rational, they were dramatically "portrayed as screaming in the forest…" (39). Ketchum also found that, even though the end result of the nine-year conflict was the timber company, Pacific Lumber, losing its licence, and even though Earth First! precipitated the coverage and help keep the topics in the news, coverage was framed so it "prevented protestors from being viewed by the public as effective actors." "Defining" sources are studied in this thesis; in Ketchum's study, Earth First! was not often presented as one. When Pacific Lumber lost its licence, the decision was presented as part of "bureaucratic procedure," rather than the success of a long-fought battle by persistent environmentalists. Relevant to this thesis is Ketchum's concluding thought – that public

journalism offers a more thoughtful style of journalism that would be more likely to be more open to viewpoints outside of those of status quo elites.

Numerous academics comment on the contradiction of elite source dominance in supposedly pluralistic societies (Gans 1979; Hansen 1991; Sigal 1973). Grabe, Zhou and Barnett (1999) remark: "The dominance of those in power to speak and be heard contradicts the very notion of a pluralistic society in which journalists have a social responsibility to safeguard the rights of individuals and to assume the role of watchdog over government and big business" (294). These authors also summarize the perspective of an early commentator on the topic, Schudson (1978), who suggested "that news-making begins with news sources and that if journalism indeed provides the first rough draft of history, news sources are the first drafts people" (293). The implications of this analogy are clear: if government and other elite sources dominate the news, history may be biased towards their perspectives; if civil society voices are not heard in the news, history may be unaware of any perspectives they had during the time history was being made. Ketchum's analysis (2004) of the redwood logging controversy illustrates well how pluralism may be muted in news. The deep ecology perspective of Earth First! was not featured in news pieces, and yet it is perhaps this nonconformist point of view that is of greater value to governance than that of the forest industry, as it could open up discussion to a new way of viewing ecosystems. If the deep ecology perspective does not permeate the news, it may be less likely to permeate the policy-making process. Policies created with a deep ecology perspective would value the redwood ecosystem from an ethical view and for its intrinsic value, not just its economic and utilitarian values. Writes Ketchum:

> Sources that want to challenge the dominant assumptions of established economic and political systems are not given the opportunity to state their case in meaningful ways. Journalists do not encourage the audience to consider or debate the fundamental principles and values that underlie political and economic decisions (35).

The problem for governance of elite source domination has also been further considered by some academics. Taylor, Lee and Davie (2000) express concern about "skewed" views of reality received by readers. Altheide and Snow (1979) fret about "systematic distortion" in the news that deprives the public "of a more adequate understanding" (90-91). Sigal (1973) observes:

> Who makes the news affects who governs and who opposes. If the voices of government, by their ability to dominate the news, get to define the issues that are politically salient,

opposition voices frame the lines of cleavage over which policy battles are fought…The press, in amplifying some voices and muting others…affects the nature of opposition and hence of governance…Who makes news…helps determine the direction of political life… (as cited in Hansen 1991, 475)

There is some evidence that news dominated by traditional sources is not even considered particularly "strong" journalism. For instance, Hansen (1991) found that those stories that won journalism awards used a greater diversity of sources and relied less on elite sources than did other news coverage.

3.6.2 Source prominence: placement within articles

The order in which sources and information are presented is also relevant to prominence. The use of the "inverted pyramid" in journalism, the most traditional style of news writing, is built around the concept of emphasizing the "most important" information. In an inverted pyramid-style article, the "essence of the story" is provided in the first paragraph and then information is presented "in descending order of importance" (McKercher & Cumming 1998, 130). The rationale for this style is that, first, it enables the audience to read only a small portion of an article and get the gist of the story. Bird (2000) writes: "journalists have always had to work to catch and hold the attention of their audiences. The inverted pyramid structure evolved as a way to present the main points of the story as quickly as possible, allowing readers to choose whether they stayed with the story or moved onto [a more engaging article]" (30). The style also makes the work of editors easier, as they can simply cut paragraphs of an article from the bottom to fit the space available. Therefore, sources that are used later in the article are considered less important than those at the beginning. They are "disposable"; if the editor needs to reduce the length of an article, common practice would have him or her cut off the paragraphs at the end of the story. The voices in these paragraphs would then not be heard in the story. A final rationale for the inverted pyramid style is that it allows journalists to organize information easily and efficiently; by following a style formula, time-pressed journalists can more quickly produce text (McKercher & Cumming 1998).

The inverted pyramid style is not seen as the epitome of journalistic writing, and has been criticized for its lack of creativity. McKercher and Cumming (1998) write: "…as a story-telling method, the inverted pyramid has problems. For one, it gets in the way of narration…It often puts an unnatural stress on one element of the story, throwing other important elements into

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obscurity. And because each successive paragraph deals with information that is less and less important, it offers readers less and less incentive to stick with a story to the end." (130). Gaber (2009) also criticizes the inverted pyramid for the judgements of importance that are inherent in it, particularly when journalists believe their writing to be "objective":

> This is the nostrum that a news story *must* be structured with the most important aspects of the story coming first – classically the "who, what, where when and why". The problem with the inverted pyramid is that it conceals more than it reveals. For many, if not most, news stories, deciding the gist – and hence what should come first – involves essentially subjective judgments. "Who" is the most important character in the narrative? "What" (and according to whom) happened? "Where" did the event or events described take place? "When" was the significant moment and… "Why"? (41)

Despite these criticisms, academics indicate that the inverted pyramid is still commonly used as a news style, though some authors observe that newspapers have increased their usage of alternative styles, such as "topic segments," the feature, the narrative, chronological order pieces, or suspense-based articles, which generally do not use the inverted pyramid (Brennen 2000; Gaber 2009; McKercher & Cumming 1998; Robinson 2006; Zoch & Turk 1998). McKercher and Cumming (1998) write that the inverted pyramid "still is a newsroom staple." This author's own reading of the *Winnipeg Free Press* verifies its existence in the publication studied in this thesis.

This thesis attributes significance to the order in which sources are presented because it is assumed that not all newsreaders read the entire article. Perhaps this assumption is common sense, but it is still germane for this study to find evidence that readers do not read 100% of the text in articles. Surprisingly, few studies appear to have been done to prove the existence of "skimming" tendencies of readers, or to measure how many paragraphs they will read in an average article. Schramm (1947) found that "nearly a quarter of readers of stories in dailies with 10,000 circulation or less stopped reading by the sixth paragraph; nearly half the readers of stories of dailies with 300,000 or more circulation did so by the sixth paragraph" (as cited in Fico & Freedman 2001, 439). Fico and Freeman (2001) also cite a reporting textbook that "warns beginning reporters that fewer than 60% of readers complete a five-paragraph story and that fewer than 40% complete a ten-paragraph story" (Fedler et al. 2005, 132, as cited in Fico & Freedman 2001, 440). The authors conclude from this finding that "the higher in a story that a source appears, the greater the likelihood of that source setting not only the story's agenda but the

reader's agenda as well." The importance of source placement was also supported in an effects-based study by van Dijk (1991), which found that "headlines, subheads…and leading paragraphs are the most frequently remembered parts of news articles and can shape the entire story's framework of interpretation." (as cited in Mac Arthur 2007, 35).

Few other studies actually measure reader behaviour patterns. Rather, many authors simply seem to assume that sources cited earlier in articles are more likely to be encountered by readers. Fico and Cote (1999) discuss the access that different political candidates had to the "first paragraph lead position" in stories and "how equally their assertions were treated in terms of story position in paragraphs 2 through 5." They assumed earlier placement to translate into higher prominence. They suggest: "Readers may stop after the first paragraph lead, and even those who read beyond may stop within several additional paragraphs. An arguably balanced story dealing sequentially with candidate assertions therefore may not be perceived as such by a reader who stops before the point where the opposition speaks." Other studies have used similar measurements of prominence that assume source placement in earlier paragraphs amounts to higher prominence (e.g. Bodle 1996). Most of the studies that measure source placement relate to elections and politics (Barber 2008; Fico & Freedman 2008; Fico, Freedman & Love 2006; Freedman & Fico 2004) or the treatment of women as sources (Aday & Devitt 2001; Armstrong 2004; Zoch & Turk 1998).

Few studies could be found that measured the placement of civil society groups. In one of the few examples available, Taylor, Lee and Davie (2000) did measure the usage of environmental activists as sources in a logging controversy, and found that industry sources were "usually mentioned in the lead or first few paragraphs of the story, while opponents like SLAP [South Louisianians Against Pollution] and the HWTC [Hazardous Waste Treatment Council] appeared later in the story…" (189). The authors view such imbalance in source treatment as problematic; "The media, through selection of sources and placement of their statements in stories, can legitimize one perspective while withholding legitimacy from another, in essence restricting the flow of information to the community and thereby influencing the outcome of the conflict" (176). This thesis will take a similar measurement of civil society usage, though some aspects of Lake Winnipeg water quality are less conflict-ridden, with the exception of the hog industry.

The prominence of other source types has also been studied. Fico and Freedman (1998) found that "experts" commenting on election affairs were more likely to be placed below the tenth paragraph, while Fico and Balog (2003) similarly found that "nonpartisan sources" were often placed below the tenth paragraph.[63] Their conclusions were that this placement indicated the sources were "less important" and that readers were less likely to encounter these sources' perspectives. In their study of females as sources, Zoch & Turk (1998) found that female sources were placed less prominently than their male counterparts. Armstrong concludes of this pattern of gender usage: "A story has a hierarchical structure. Gender mentions that appear in the headline or in the story lead would generally imply that a person played a more prominent role within the story than someone mentioned in the last two paragraphs" (141).

The placement of articles also bears mentioning, as it is studied in this thesis's content analysis. Many article placement studies have considered whether or not articles were placed on the most prominent page of the newspaper, the front page (e.g. Gutstein & Hackett 1998; Lai, Lane & Jones 2009; Zoch & Turk 1998). However, the placement of articles later in the pages of section A, or in other sections of the newspaper (B, C, D etc.) has received limited attention (e.g. Yang 1996). Though little empirical evidence exists that articles in, for instance, section D are less prominent than those in section A or B, that is the common sense assumption under which this thesis will operate. It should be recognized that certain readers may gravitate first towards later "specialty" sections; for instance, if section D were an "automotive" section, perhaps car-lovers would turn first to these pages. However, this study is most interested in what the *average* reader is likely to do, and the assumption of this thesis is that the majority of readers begin their news consumption with section A.

3.6.3 Source prominence: number of words attributed to sources

Another fairly common measure of prominence in content analyses is word counts, often measured as column inches in newspapers (Fico & Cote 1999; Fico & Freedman 2008; Lacy, Fico & Simon 1991; Simon, Fico & Lacy 1989). The presumption behind this measurement is perhaps quite obvious: length equates to higher prominence (particularly when paired with

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[63] This finding runs somewhat counter to the literature described in section 3.6.1, which indicates that "expert" sources are "elite" sources and, therefore, would be expected to have both higher frequency and higher placement. Perhaps election coverage, at least in the United States, is somewhat different in its usage of sources, with partisan sources being placed earlier than "expert" and "nonpartisan" sources.

source placement early in the article). Zoch and Turk (1998) explain that length may be construed by readers as "a cue…[of] importance in a story (longer is more important)…" In addition, some scholars have studied article length as a cue for importance of an article (e.g. Neely 2009; Stuart 2003). This latter measurement will also be taken for the content analysis in this study.

3.6.4 Source attribution: paraphrasing versus direct quotation.

Some academics also consider whether the journalist directly quotes or paraphrases a source as a characteristic of prominence and balance (Aday & Devitt 2001; Carter, Fico & McCabe 2002; Craig 2003; Gibson & Zillmann 1998; Gibson & Zillmann 1993; Haas 2007; Stempel & Culbertson 1984; Weaver et al. 1974; Zoch & Turk 1998). The few studies that have been done on how readers actually perceive different attribution styles have provided mixed results. Gibson & Zillmann (1998, 1993) found that sources who were directly quoted were more likely to be viewed sympathetically by the reader, have their perspective adopted by the reader, have increased perceived credibility and have their perspective remembered by the reader. They conclude that attribution style is more than a stylistic trait, but also a way in which the meaning of news can be subtly altered; "imbalanced personal quotation can be effective in swaying reader's opinion to one side of an issue…The journalist, in being able to choose which points of view to represent with direct quotation in a news story, is thus invested with considerable power" (174).

In contrast, an earlier study by Weaver et al. (1974) did not find that quotation marks greatly changed reader evaluation of newspaper articles. The authors report that direct quotes resulted in "more dramatic and more emotional perceptions of the persons in the stories" but not change in "reader comprehension and retention of material." Whether or not direct quotations affect reader comprehension and judgement is of importance to the Lake Winnipeg case study because some of the topics discussed in news articles, such as the expansion of industrial hog production or the construction of the Devils Lake outlet, have definite proponents and opponents. Were one "side"[64] to be directly quoted much more often than the others, this side would have an informational and credibility advantage if, indeed, direct quotes do alter reader perception.

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[64] The word "side" is in quotation marks to indicate that these issues are not dichotomous; there are many more "sides" than just two. Different stakeholders have different interpretations of the situation, and their views can not be lumped entirely into "pro" and "con" categories.

However, one caution offered by Haas (2007) is that increased quotation does not necessarily mean the quality in those quotations is high; in his study of citizen quotation in a public journalism initiative, he found that while citizens were quoted more than elite sources, they often provided "anecdotal" information, whereas elite sources provided more solution-based information. Therefore, citizens were presented as victims and elite sources as problem-solvers.

Scholars have offered several reasons why source attribution may vary. Aday and Devitt (2001) muse about why journalists write differently for different sources, suggesting that reasons could be simply because some people are more "quotable" or, of greater concern, that some sources are "taken more seriously" than others and are, therefore, allowed to say things in their own words (68). Gibson & Zillmann (1998), reflect on why readers may react differently to direct quotations, suggesting they may give these sources more credence because "they recognize it as unmanipulated [compared to] the same testimony that is paraphrased and potentially modified by a journalist." (168).

3.6.5 Framing and sources as news "definers"

Also closely linked with prominence is the question of who defines the news perspective. Canadian scholars Gutstein and Hackett (1998) suggest that the first source quoted in an article is most often the actor that "defines" the story and "supports the theme or framing of the article." They suggest most later sources can be considered "counter-balancing" or "responding" sources (14).

There is a considerable literature on the topic of "framing" in journalism, and several variations on the term's definition (e.g. McCombs & Shaw 1972; Scheufele & Tewksbury 2007; Wanta, Golan & Lee 2004). Much of the literature also links the concept very closely with that of agenda-setting (e.g. Kosicki 1993; Maher 2003). Aday 2006 succinctly defines the difference between the two terms: "[agenda-setting] argues that the news media transfer issue salience to audience agendas by covering some topics more than others. By contrast, framing research is less concerned with the relative quantity of stories about various issues than with the qualitative ways in which those stories are covered" (767).

While Aday is speaking of *issue* prominence, framing and agenda-setting also relate to *sourc*e prominence. In many perspectives of both framing and agenda-setting, sources are

considered part of the process,[65] and it is on this aspect that this section will focus. Entman (1993) describes the concept as: "To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in communication text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or recommendation for treatment for the item described" (52). For instance, an environmental organization could attempt to frame the issue of Lake Winnipeg nutrient loading by sending out a news release highlighting the contribution of the hog industry to the problem, perhaps as evidenced by research the group conducted. If a newspaper uses this news release and covers the topic from their perspective, using them as a prominent source, they have contributed to the news frame. They have promoted a particular problem definition (the hog industry contributes to nutrient loading), and may suggest a "recommendation for treatment" (e.g. reduce the number of intensive livestock operations in Manitoba).

An alternative frame would be the hog industry's perspective which, as this thesis will discuss at several points, is essentially that they are one of many polluters and that they already abide by strict guidelines and regulations. A news release sent out by them might frame the issue around the effects of regulations on hog industry workers, thereby framing the problem in economic terms; they would have presented a problem definition much different from that of the environmental organization, and their recommendation for treatment would likely be quite different (e.g. let the hog industry implement nutrient controls in response to public pressure, not government regulations).

Numerous academics have studied framing from the perspective of sources. Findings have been similar to those of source frequency, discussed at length in section 3.6.1 – that government and other "elite" players are much more likely to define news coverage (Archibald 1996; Gutstein & Hackett 1998; Hansen 1991; Sander 2006). In a series of Canadian studies by Gutstein and Hackett (1998), elite actors were shown to also be the most common "defining" actors. One of the studies found business defining 31.5% of stories in the *Vancouver Sun*, whereas labour (i.e. unions) defined only 8.3%. The authors comment on the dominance of business as an elite actor: "Business people were sometimes even allowed to define issues in

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[65] Authors consider many different factors in framing. Journalist information selection, editor selection and alteration, reader interpretation and the semiotics of language are also considered part of the "framing" process (e.g. McCombs & Shaw 1972; Scheufele & Tewksbury 2007; Wanta, Golan & Lee 2004). It is outside the scope of this thesis to fully describe these aspects of framing. The aspect of immediate interest is how sources contribute to framing.

labour stories. In contrast, labour spokespeople were nearly invisible in business news…*The Sun* gave labour neither the opportunity to define nor respond to business issues" (32).

Gutstein and Hackett also report on a content analysis of articles on poverty in *The Sun* in which they found a declining use of advocacy group voices over a nine-year period. In 1988, advocacy groups defined 32.7% of stories, while in 1997, they defined 24.5%. In comparison, government increased its role as "definer" in this period of time, from defining 9.9% of poverty stories in 1988 to 27.4% in 1997. The authors conclude that there is "steady increase in the number of articles in which the authoritative source served as the definer of the issue and not as the respondent" (35).

The authors who study this characteristic of news coverage generally find the pattern of elite sources defining news as disconcerting and problematic to the responsibility of journalism to the public. Sander (2006) writes: "How the media frame an issue can influence public opinion by stressing specific values, facts, or other considerations related to the issue and endowing them with greater apparent relevance to the issue than they might appear to have under an alternative frame… The end result is a narrowing of relevant news topics to the exclusion of various angles on a particular issue and to events happening elsewhere" (39).

3.7 What is the purpose of the press?

Journalism has gone through many stages in its history. Stephens (1988) notes that newspapers in the 1700s influenced the American Revolution with their unrestrained political criticism, some of which secured the writers time in jail for libel. In contrast, Kesterton (1967) says that newspapers in Canada in the 1700s focused on European news, and were funded by government; as such, they were quite different from their American contemporaries. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, newspapers in both Canada and the US were tied to political parties; Peterson (1966) describes US newspapers at the time as "partisan sheets devoted to savage attacks on party opponents… supported by political parties and factions" (39). A similar system developed in Canada with the "Party Presses" of the 1800s (Kesterton 1967; Stewart 1948). Then came the penny press, aimed at the mass public; in 1835, the *New York Sun* printed reports about a "new life form"[66] on the moon that writers had viewed with a telescope;

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[66] This life form was described as such: "They average four feet in height, were covered, except on the face, with short and glossy copper-colored hair, and had wings composed of thin membrane…" (as qtd. in Stephens 1988, 252).

when these stories were found to be hoax, the paper was still regarded "with little resentment and some admiration" (Stephens 1988, 252).[67] Stewart (1948) reports that Canadian newspapers also changed to appeal to the mass public, and elements of "yellow journalism"[68] were incorporated, but that they did not become as sensational or "melodramatic" as American newspapers.

Serious journalists now would frown on the overtly political or astoundingly concocted stories described above. Today, criticism of politics may be allowed in editorial pages, but the actual news pages are supposed to reflect balanced, fair-minded and impartial reporting, not unapologetic political attacks. While newspapers are often suspected of having political leanings, they at least pretend to be independent of political parties, appearing to treat all equally. The fabrication of stories is viewed as inexcusable, and when committed, will likely result in a journalist losing his or her job. There are certain words that represent contemporary journalism ideals: neutral, fair, balanced, truthful, factual, independent, objective, investigative (Haas 2007; Eksterowics & Roberts 2000; McKercher & Cumming 1998; Merritt 1998; Peterson 1966; Rosen 1999; Stephens 1988; Weaver & Wilhoit 1996). Weaver and Wilhoit (1996) describe the conventional self-conceptions of journalists as having either an "interpretive/investigative" role or a "disseminator" role. While many of these conventions stem from American ideals – such as the concept of the "freedom of the press" – they have also greatly influenced Canadian journalism values. It is also worth noting that the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1982) includes a section with striking similarities to the American First Amendment. This section of the Canadian *Charter* (section 2.b) states that "Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms:…freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication" (University of Ottawa n.d.). There are both significant similarities and differences between American and Canadian journalism. However, of relevance to this thesis, both are democracies that guarantee freedom to their presses and to civil society.

Critics of contemporary journalism argue that, while there may be a great deal of value in the ideals of the journalist as "the professional bystander, watching politics and public life roll by," this approach does not always best serve democracy (Rosen 1999, 55). It should also be

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[67] Such pranks were commonplace during this time of the penny press, the first newspapers aimed at the mass public: Peterson (1966) writes that beginning in the 1830s "The press switched its major emphasis from politics to human interest, crime, sex, trivia and hoaxes" (40).

[68] Yellow journalism is "journalism that exploits, distorts, or exaggerates the news to create sensations and attract readers" (Webster's 1987, 1904).

noted that there is abundant literature that tries to prove and measure that actual journalistic creations are not objective, apolitical, independent and balanced (see, for example, Boykoff & Boykoff 2004; Clarke 2008; Cohen-Almagor 2008; Ellman and Germano 2009; Fico, Zeldes, Carpenter & Diddi 2008). The involvement of the news media in encouraging a "debate" about the existence of climate change is also an example of how the "balance" norm in the news media may actually be a negative force (Boykoff & Boykoff 2004; Stamm, Clark & Eblacas 2000; Zhao 2009). This critical literature is just part of a broader body of academic thought that argues journalism is not fulfilling its potential for democracy. The concept of participatory journalism, in which citizens write many of the stories that appear in a publication, has developed to better supply "common" views. For example, Halifax, Nova Scotia, has *Street Feat,* which highlights the issue of poverty and homelessness by having those who have experienced these social problems write pieces (Howley 2005). The goals of this publication include: "To provide a voice for the poor and needy; to educate and develop a critical conscience; to develop a community based solution to poverty" (Street Feat n.d.)

"Public journalism," the journalism reform movement discussed in this section, also aims to improve journalism's contribution to democracy. The idea behind many of these reform movements is that journalists should *be concerned about* whether or not their readers, the country's citizens, *care* about democracy, want to participate in democracy, and whether or not they understand the issues.[69] Peterson (1966) made the case for a less indifferent journalism when he wrote the following appeal, both insightful and metaphorical:

> One of the greatest deeds the press could perform, I think, is helping its readers to accept an idea that the press has already accepted – that responsibility goes with freedom.[70] If the press links responsibility with freedom to publish, then should not the reader link responsibility with freedom to read and listen? In short, does the citizen in a democratic society have the right to be misinformed, ill-informed or uninformed? The press has begun to see its own responsibilities, but it has done precious little to make readers see theirs.
>
> Before it can, the press must get rid of its curious notion, shared by the public, that what it sells is a commodity like detergents, depilatories and dog biscuits. There is a vast

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[69] In addition, other types of reform journalism could be considered. The communitarian movement, which is linked in many of its ideals to public journalism, seeks to "take the emphasis off press rights (i.e. journalistic freedom) and put it on press responsibilities" (Merrill, Gade & Blevens 2001, 74). Participatory journalism has citizens write many of the stories that appear in the product.

[70] Peterson is writing about the "Freedom of the Press" amendment of the American Constitution, but similar ideals of press freedom exist in Canada. Therefore, his comments made on American journalism are germane to a study of Canadian news.

difference between the products of the AP [Associated Press] and the A & P,[71] and newsmen really know there is, even if they and the public sometimes talk as if there isn't. Consumer choice is one of the blessings of the supermarket, and if a customer wants to stock his wire pushcart with pretzels and beer instead of proteins, milk and leafy green vegetables, his dietary eccentricities are no concern of the merchant. But the diet of the reader is of concern to editor and publisher. They should be far less quick than at present to keep their shelves of beer and pretzels filled with a superabundance of items, because that is where the traffic is, and far more prone to move their nourishing foods.

When the issue is both survival and the smooth functioning of democratic society, the citizen certainly should be as obliged to be informed as the press is to inform him. He has the duty to study the facts, unsettling as they may be; weigh ideas which do not necessarily match his own, disturbing as that may be; and put his basic assumptions up for challenge, impossible as that may seem. The press is accepting only half of its responsibility if it does not help him to realize that he must. (47-48)

Peterson is stressing the idea on which the public journalism movement is founded: that journalism should "make it easier for citizens to make intelligent decisions about public affairs" (Charity 1995, 2) and that it ought to facilitate the involvement of citizens in democracy. The calls for journalism to change, particularly that by the public journalism movement, will be explored in section 3.7.2, but first the problems of the mass media that have led to this call for change will be examined.

3.7.1 Problems of the Press

In the above quote, Peterson compares news products to supermarket products – "pretzels and beer" are trivial but entertaining news products while "proteins, milk and leafy green vegetables" are the news products that require something more of the readers: thought, engagement and the acknowledgment that it is healthy for them and for their community to maintain a balance of "nutritious" news (e.g. environmental, social, political issues) and "snack" news (e.g. Hollywood stars' escapades).

But in the increasingly difficult fight for public attention (among newspapers, radio, television, internet etc.), newspapers may have made compromises between making the public "eat its broccoli" and producing news that can quickly grab the public's attention and maintain or increase readership. Particularly in the US, the decline in press readership became painfully

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[71] Quite possibly referring to the grocery and drug mart chain A & P (see http://www.metro.ca/corpo/profil-corpo/historique/2005/historyap.en.html)

evident in the latter part of the twentieth century (Fisher 1991; Kaplan 1992; Kerwin 2000; Patterson 2007).[72]

Statistics about newspaper readership in Canada suggest a more positive situation for Canadian newspapers. In 2009, the Newspaper Audience Databank reported that 77% of adults read a newspaper each week in the six top Canadian markets (Toronto, Ottawa-Gatineau, Montréal, Calgary, Edmonton and Vancouver) (Canadian Newspaper Association 2009). With the inclusion of a 10% increase in online readers, the result was an increase in total readership. The research organization characterized this situation as "strong." Data from 2008 suggest that the situation of the *Winnipeg Free Press* is also positive. The *Free Press* has the "highest overall readership numbers [in Canada] of any major multi-newspaper city," with 70% of adult Winnipeggers reading the newspaper at least once during the week (McNeill 2008). There was also a 30% increase in online readership between 2007 and 2008, from 11% to 14%. The other major newspaper in Winnipeg, the *Winnipeg Sun*, had a weekly readership of 43%. Therefore, it should be noted that newspaper readership in Canada appears not to have declined as severely as it has in the United States (if Winnipeg data are representative, which may not be the case). Given that audiences are one factor in the creation of public journalism, this situation should be kept in mind when considering the potential for public journalism in Canada. However, despite the *Winnipeg Free Press's* healthy market share, it admits it is struggling financially. In November 2009, the newspaper made a major format change, creating an "enhanced weekend edition" that shifted many Sunday features into the Saturday edition. On Sundays, it now publishes a shorter tabloid-style paper called *On7*, which is not delivered to homes. The newspaper writes about the change:

> The paper has seen revenues drop in the past year. We did not want to continue putting less and less in each paper. Consolidating the weekend editions will save money, keep the newspaper strong and protect its quality. Delivery costs are the single biggest expense the Free Press has – more than all the reporters, editors and photographers who produce the news, and more than all the newsprint. The Free Press expects to reduce expenses significantly with this move (*Winnipeg Free Press* 2009).

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[72] Daily newspaper readership in the United States fell from 73% of the population in 1967 to 51% in 1988 (Rosen 1999). In the second half of the twentieth century, the "household penetration" of newspapers – the number of households that regularly buy newspapers – similarly fell; reports Woo (2000) of the American trend: "In 1970, newspapers had nearly a 100 percent household penetration, nationally. Total daily and Sunday Circulation stood at 62 million. America's households totalled 63 million. But by the mid-'90s, circulation had dropped to around 60 million, while the number of households had grown to nearly 100 million" (22).

Therefore, even though industry statistics about newspapers in Canada and the *Winnipeg Free Press*, specifically, sound positive, it is apparent that even a newspaper with strong market share is struggling.

In the US, the decline in readership has contributed to newspapers searching for ways to recapture audiences. Increases in "infotainment" and sensationalism have been one of the results (Iggers 1999; Massey 1997; Merrill, Gade & Blevens 2001; Stephens 1988). The degree to which this has occurred in Canada is not entirely clear, though sensationalism and infotainment do enjoy a presence in Canadian media. The Committee of Concerned Journalists, an American group, notes this problem in its Statement of Concern (n.d.): "Revolutionary changes in technology, in our economic structure and in our relationship with the public, are pulling journalism from its traditional moorings…many journalists feel a sense of lost purpose. There is even doubt about the meaning of news, doubt evident when serious journalistic organizations drift toward opinion, infotainment and sensation out of balance with the news". Both Stephens (1988) and Iggers (1999) note that sensationalism, focusing on such topics as sex, violence, and the personal lives of politicians, was present as early as the 1700s. However, during the mid-1900s there was a push, at least by some press outlets, to focus on more newsworthy and respectable topics, a movement that appears to have gone into decline as competition among media increased (Woo 2000). For instance, Schudson (2003) reports that a 1998 study by the Committee of Concerned Journalists "found a deterioration in the coverage of complex issues on television and in newspapers and newsmagazines between 1977 and 1997, with a declining attention to policy issues and an increasing attention to lifestyle, entertainment, and scandal" (94). This decline in serious and complex news is just one of the concerns with modern-day journalism and one notable way in which journalism may not be serving its duty to democracy.

Another commonly discussed problem with the press is a "disconnect with readers" (Haas 2007). Researchers (e.g. Haas 2007; Poindexter, Heider & McCombs 2006) have found that journalists are under-covering news topics that major segments of the population would like to see covered, and that people are becoming less trusting of the news media (Merrill, Gade & Blevens 2001). A 1994 survey by the *Times-Mirror Center for the People and the Press* found that 71% of Americans felt that "the news media get in the way of society solving its

problems"[73] and only 25% agreed that the media "helps society solve its problems" (Merritt 1998). Similarly, Woo (2000) reported on the widening gap between the press and the public trust: "Poll after poll showed the public esteem for the press was dropping, as was confidence and trust in what newspapers printed" (22).

Part of this problem could stem from the fact that journalists may be increasingly unaware of what the public feels journalism should provide to them (Massey 1998). Haas (2007) summarized the few studies that have been done (by Weaver et al. 2006; Heider, McCombs & Poindexter 2006; Poindexter, Heider & McCombs 2006) on citizen attitudes towards journalism compared to journalists' attitudes about journalism. Unfortunately, all of these studies on public attitudes were done in the United States, and so any extension to a Canadian context can only be suggested based on the similarity of US journalism experience to that of Canadian in some (but not all) respects. Haas (2007) writes of data concerning the US experience: "They show not only that a disconnect exists between what citizens and journalists expect from the press but also, and equally important, that members of marginalized social groups, whether based on race, class, or gender, perceive a need for a form of journalism that is committed to help articulating and addressing their particular concerns" (52-53). Not all citizens want objective, pure and "hard" news; many, particularly "women, African Americans, Latinos, and poorer and less educated citizens" want more information on possible solutions (Haas 2007; Poindexter, Heider & McCombs 2006).

This interest in more complex, solution-focused news may also connect to criticism of journalism's polarization of views, and how it does not reflect the complexity of many citizens' views. Warhover (2000), Rosen (1999), Merritt (1998) and Charity (1995) note that citizens think in more nuanced, less "black and white" terms than is generally believed. Warhover (2000) describes the problem in the following way:

> I would talk about balance this way with reporters: Imagine the spectrum of opinion as numbers from 1 to 10. To whom do we normally talk? Well, generally not the ones and tens – they are so radical as to be untrustworthy. So we talk to the twos and nines – those firmly in one camp or another. But, by doing that, we cut out the people in the middle – the people with mixed feelings on the issue. We assume that if we present 'both sides' of the story, people can figure out which side they'll jump to. *But people – the public – resist being thrown into one camp or another…* (emphasis added) (56)

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[73] Similarly, Lule (2001) writes that "surveys show people think the news media hinder rather than help the country" (4).

Similarly, Schaffer (2004) emphasizes the need to "redefine balance" and suggests that to report "two sides of a story and say it's fair and balanced is not balanced coverage – it's bipolar…[readers] often don't see their concerns reflected in any of the extreme positions." The Committee of Concerned Journalists (n.d.) also notes the problem of "bipolar coverage" when it writes that journalism is obliged "to strive to fairly represent the varied viewpoints and interests of society, and to place them in context rather than highlight only the conflicting fringes of the debate." These quotes seem to suggest that even if the majority of people rate in the middle of an "opinion scale," at four, five, or six, their more moderate views may not be heard, and the few people that rate at two and nine will be heard. As a result, a false and polarized picture of reality is created. This situation could have a negative effect on governance. It may appear in the media that the views of those involved in the issue are too far apart for any sort of agreement, consensus or understanding to occur, whereas in reality viewpoints of stakeholders are closer together. Extending the discussion to Lake Winnipeg nutrient pollution, the contention around the hog industry can be considered in a hypothetical manner. If the entire hog industry is presented in the media as focused on economic gains at any social and environmental costs, and all those expressing concern about the hog industry are presented as vegetarians[74] who want to ban the industry entirely, a solution upon which both sides can agree may seem impossible. It cannot be said at this point in this study whether or not the hog industry debate is presented in this way. Nevertheless, it is useful to keep in mind the fact that the use of adversarial or conflict frames is a standard criticism of journalism. This approach to coverage discourages attention to the middle ground, encourages extreme statements to win coverage, and could make it more difficult for civil society groups to gain credibility as reasoned and informed voices.

3.7.2 A Call for Change

For veteran journalist Merritt (1998), the role of journalism in US society had changed for the worse by the later half of the twentieth century. He writes: "Like other Americans, thoughtful journalists are troubled. Many of the people who entered newspaper journalism in the mid-20th century and most of those who succeeded at it, shared a vision. Journalism, we sensed, mattered; it was an integral part of the democratic process; it had purpose" (5). In his book,

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[74] Many activists against intensive livestock production eat meat, including pork – their concern is with the concentration of hogs.

Merritt discusses the above-noted problems of the press and explains how he and other "thoughtful journalists" and academics concluded in the early 1990s that journalism required restoration.

However, what prompted the subsequent journalism reform movement were not only the problems already discussed, but also another increasingly anti-democratic problem: that of control and manipulation of the media by political public relations. Most public journalism experts cite the inception of the public journalism reform movement to be around the time of the 1988 Bush versus Dukakis Presidential campaign (Haas 2007; Rosen 1999; Merritt 1998). Rather than focusing on the issues, the candidates focused on creating "simplistic image-management techniques to appeal to voters," such as Bush Senior's "visits to flag factories to show his patriotism" and Dukakis riding a tank and "clutching a machine gun…as music from the movie *Patton* played over the sound system," to enhance his military image (Haas 2007, 10; Rosen 1998, 38). After the campaign, some journalists looked back at the coverage and its "emptiness", and many felt they needed to "move away from coverage of candidate strategies and tactics to focus on substantive policy issues of concern to voters" (Haas 2007, 10). In other words, they realized that the press had an obligation to report on the policies put forward by the candidates, rather than fall into the trap of reporting on glitzy image-building stunts fabricated by the candidates' public relations teams. They recognized that journalism had a role to play in democracy, and the 1988 election media coverage did not best serve this role.[75]

In a Canadian context, one could similarly scrutinize cases of political image-building over-shadowing policy in the news. In 2009, news coverage of Prime Minister Stephen Harper surprising the audience at a National Arts Centre gala by playing The Beatles's song "With a Little Help From my Friends" on the piano is one recent unashamed, and perhaps successful, attempt at image-building. Some news coverage on the performance did comment on recent cuts to arts funding under the Harper government (a more substantial policy matter), but these comments generally appeared later in the articles; in the eyes of the media, the most newsworthy topic was clearly the performance itself (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 2009; Ivison 2009; Leeder & Taber 2009).

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[75] The discussion of public journalism must necessarily focus on the United States, where the movement originated. Later discussion will consider the movement's application to Canadian media, as the ideas formed in the American movement did move to other countries (see for example, Haas 2007, Chapter 7: "The Practice of Public Journalism Worldwide").

3.7.3 Public Journalism: An Attempt at Reform

Public journalism[76] is a type of journalism designed to give civil society a voice in the media. There are many variations on its definition – in fact, one of the critiques of the movement is that it is rather malleable (Massey & Haas 2002) – but its essence is quite clear, and definitions from key public journalism figures echo each other. One of the concept's pioneers, Jay Rosen (1999), provides a fairly complex and informative definition that public journalism is an "argument" that journalists should:

> 1) Address people as citizens, potential participants in public affairs rather than victims or spectators; 2) help the political community act upon, rather than just learn about, its problem; 3) improve the climate of public discussion, rather than simply watch it deteriorate; and 4) help make public life go well, so that it earns its claim on our attention. (262)

Charity (1995) provides a much simpler definition that evokes the same ideas: "Public journalism is nothing more than the conviction that journalism's business is about making citizenship work" (9).

Jan Schaffer, 2004 Executive Director of the Pew Center for Civic Journalism, said public journalism is meant to help citizens "make civic decisions, to engage in civic dialogue and action – and generally to exercise their responsibilities in a democracy."

This focus on citizenship, on enabling citizens to participate knowledgably in democracy, is echoed in other public journalism literature (Merritt 1998; Massey 1998; Iggers 1999; Massey & Haas 2002; Eksterowizc & Roberts 2000; Witt 2003; Haas 2007).

One major aspect of public journalism is to consult with citizens when creating coverage, not just to consult with government officials and "experts" when writing the article, and then be content with citizen involvement to begin when the citizen reads the article. Rather, public journalism has found many ways to solicit citizen input prior to an article's publication. This input goes far beyond the simple "man on the street" interviews (Charity 1995; Warhover 2000). Charity (1995) suggests that the type of usual citizen voice inclusion is viewed by many journalists as "a kind of welfare system for the news-space impoverished – a service aimed much

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[76] Also called "civic journalism," "community journalism," and "citizen-based" journalism (Massey 1998; Rosen 1999).

more at good community relations than at forwarding the debate on public issues…" (76). He also says: "In practice, the lines of communication between journalists and citizens are often random, fragmented, and full of static…Typically, newspapers depend on some combination of letters to the editor, phone-in lines, polls, overheard conversation, and brief interviews as forms of public listening, but – to be honest – rarely does the information gleaned from these snippets do more than get reporters and editors started" (76).

Public journalism takes a different approach. Many of its projects actually *start* by soliciting citizenship and reader input even before a word of an article is written, for instance by holding focus groups with citizens/readers, holding forums, creating citizen input panels, polling citizens[77] (e.g. through telephone or by questionnaires) or simply going out into the community to try to ascertain what is on the minds of citizens[78] (Charity 1995; Rosen 1999; Eksterowicz & Roberts 2000; Friedland & Nichols 2002; Gade & Perry 2003; Haas 2007). The purpose of such activities is to have citizens help set the news agenda, rather than allowing government, experts, or the media themselves select this agenda. Massey (1998) describes this as a "bottom-up" setting of the agenda; where "'average' citizens, their voices mediated through civic journalists, tell community elite what to think about" (395).

While these activities help media *select* the stories, public journalism also often aims to increase citizen participation as *sources* in the stories. The Canadian Association of Journalists (2002) appears to support this view, at least in its statement of principles, writing that "we will encourage our organizations to make room for the interests of all: minorities and majorities; those with power and those without it…" Charity (1995) suggests that while traditional journalism tends to view government officials/spokespeople and experts as "exalted" (11), public journalism views them as equal to other citizens, although their participation in formal decision-making does sometimes make it logical to use them as sources. Massey (1998) suggests that "for civic journalists, a community's 'voiceless' members – its non-elite, 'average' citizens – should be the mainstay sources of newsworthy information for everyday reporting" (395). Traditionally

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[77] Polling is recognized by many authors as an imperfect way to include citizen input (Haas 2007; Rosen 1999; Iggers 1999). However, as a beginning point in a public journalism project, these same authors suggest it has benefits.

[78] By "going out into the community," I do not mean getting quick "streeter" quotes, but rather, as Charity (1995) discusses, going to "where citizens talk," be it flea markets, churches, barber shops, coffee houses etc. and really *listening* to citizens rather than grabbing quick quotes.

"voiceless" members include "citizen organizations," non-elites, and the "unaffiliated public" (Massey & Haas 2002, 568).

Content analysis of actual sourcing has shown that some public journalism projects have increased the use of citizen voices. In their analysis of public journalism projects over ten years, Friedland and Nichols (2002) were optimistic, writing that "Civic journalism clearly extended the *reach* of journalism, incorporating news voices of citizens that simply would not otherwise have been heard" (14). Among the cases studied, almost half had an even division between "citizens and officials as sources of information and expertise," while 25% saw a higher reliance on citizen sources than official sources, and 25% a higher reliance on official sources. Many other analyses also found stronger citizen source reliance in public journalism than in traditional journalism (Blazier & Lemert 2000; Haas 2007; Kennemar & South 2002; Maier & Potter 2001; Massey 1997; Massey 1998; Warhover 2000). Writes Haas (2007): "This suggests, in turn, that news organizations do indeed make efforts to provide citizens, including members of marginalized social groups, with opportunities to articulate their particular concerns in public" (54). However, these findings are contradicted by studies that do not show as strong representation of citizen sources (Ewart 2002; Lee 2001). Therefore, Haas (2007) suggests that success in changing sourcing patterns is "mixed" and "inconclusive" (54).

Important to note, however, is that simple numerical counts of the number of citizens or "non-elites" quoted compared to the number of "elites" do not measure the quality of news coverage. While, as Haas (2007) notes, very few qualitative studies have been done on public journalism,[79] those that exist suggest citizens are treated quite differently from, and perhaps as less valuable than, "elite" news sources. Haas (2007) studied sourcing patterns of a race relations public journalism initiative in the *Akron* (Ohio) *Beacon Journal* and found that while more citizens were quoted than elite sources, "the campaign accorded elite actors a much more prominent role than citizens, notably by limiting citizens' contributions to the recounting of personal experiences with racism while quoting at length elite actors' more general reflections on the causes and consequences of various race-related social inequities" (84). In other words,

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[79] Massey (1997) was one of the few authors aside from Haas (2007) to have a somewhat qualitative aspect to an analysis, his analyzing the directness of sources' voices: whether they were quoted directly (therefore, Massey suggests, given a more dominant voice), partially or were paraphrased (termed "indirectly" and viewed as less dominant). Massey suggests that "[R]eporters allow certain sources to dominate the news by allowing them to speak directly to news audiences" (398). He found that there was little change of citizen source dominance between a public journalism newspaper and a traditional newspaper.

citizens provided anecdotes, termed "personalization" (88) by Haas, but were less involved in serious discussion of the issue, and in the development of solutions. This finding does not support the objective that public journalism enhance democracy by allowing citizens to become involved meaningfully in public discussion. In fact, it falls into a trap noted by Charity (1995), who said: "Institutional journalism tends to make senators, police officers, and social workers the actors. Look even at journalism that relies heavily on quotations from 'ordinary people' and you'll usually see that the quotations just set up a problem for experts and officials to solve" (82). This pattern appears to be what Haas (2007) detected.

Allowing elite actors to dominate the discussion of the broader problem and of solutions follows a more traditional approach to journalism, and goes against one of the tenets of public journalism: "that journalists should position citizens as active participants in, as opposed to passive spectators to, debates about given problems" (88). Numerous writers stress the need to include citizens in developing solutions (Charity 1995; Rosen 1999), and Haas (2007) proved that a quantitative finding of a large number of citizen sources does not mean that citizens are adequately being consulted and included by a newspaper.

In fact, the question may even be raised about whether these citizen inclusions were still part of the "welfare system" of citizen quotes suggested by Charity (1995) or, at best, a narrative strategy to make stories more interesting and personable for readers. In addition, the use of citizens to merely personalize stories seems to follow a view of the public that leads to the "dumbing down" of stories: essentially that citizens cannot offer substance and are rather dim-witted (Charity 1995; Rosen 1999). Charity (1995) writes of this view of the public: "The hardest task may be to set up a newspaper conversation in which experts and citizens really talk with each other in a constructive way – contribute each according to their abilities…The suspicion that citizens can't evaluate technical ideas, let alone be a source of them, runs very deep" (76).[80]

Finally, Yancey (2000) does note that it may be more difficult to find citizen and non-elite sources than traditional sources, thereby taking up more of a journalist's time. Massey

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[80] Public journalism literature often mentions the debate between scholars Lippman and Dewey over the ability of the public to understand complex matters, Lippman contending that the day's issues were too complex for citizens to understand and that, therefore, newspapers need not bother report on that complexity, while Dewey maintained that citizens had the ability, intelligence and right to know about and understand these issues, and that they needed such knowledge to carry out their civic duties. For further discussion of these two scholars' views see for example Merritt (1998), Friedland (2000) or Haas (2007).

(1997) also writes that nonroutine sources are "more time-consuming, costly and less efficient for newsworkers to tap" (45). Massey and Haas (2002) also explain this downside of public journalism, writing that it is easier for journalists "to turn to more accessible and quotable candidates, politicians and experts" (577).

Haas (2007) does develop a "problem-solving model" that helps journalists ascertain when citizens should be focused on as sources, and when it is more effective and logical to use more official sources. He suggests that some local problems may call for a high amount of citizen involvement in solving the problem (and, therefore, more citizen sources), while other stories, particular ones that are more regional, national, or international in scope, may call for more governmental involvement (and, therefore, more expert and elite sources).[81] Haas calls more citizen-based problem-solving "direct-participatory" and the broader type "representative" (43). He writes:

> …while some problems may be resolvable by citizens themselves, many other problems require *collaboration between citizens, experts, and government officials* to be adequately addressed…for problems requiring more deep-seated, systemic intervention, either within a given locality or on a broader scale, journalists should encourage citizens, in consultation with experts who have particular knowledge about the problems in question, to formulate possible solutions and then to lobby relevant government officials to enact those solutions in practice (44).

In such cases, journalists should try to involve all parties in any community-solving work (e.g. town halls) in order to facilitate communication between them. Such an approach should result in appropriate sources from both elite and non-elite areas.

3.7.4 Public Journalism in Canada

By far the majority of reported public journalism initiatives have taken place in the United States. As a result, the bulk of academic study of the movement focuses on American efforts. In his study of whether or not public journalism was a feasible option for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, McKie (2000) noted the dearth of data. "Since there has been no effort to collect data, the extent to which public journalism has taken off in Canada is unknown." Nine years later, academic journals still have not recorded public journalism activity in Canada.

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[81] Lake Winnipeg media coverage is interesting to consider from this perspective because, due to the watershed's large size, it produces stories from all levels – local, provincial, regional and international.

In his meticulous book on public journalism initiatives, academic Haas (2007) draws on no Canadian examples, though he was able to find academic literature on public journalism in Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Mexico, Argentina, Columbia and numerous African countries. Therefore, this section will draw from McKie's work, and highlight other examples of possible Canadian public journalism which have not undergone academic study.

Miller (1998b) suggested several reasons for why public journalism has been less pronounced in Canada. Foundations in the United States that fund public journalism initiatives, most notably the Pew Center for Civic Journalism[82] and the Poynter Institute, have no counterparts in Canada. In addition, Miller suggests that media concentration in Canada could contribute to lower interest in public journalism, suggesting "when the owner of more than half of this country's newspapers is not prepared to invest in editorial training, that can be bad for both journalism and society" (220).[83] This thesis will not delve into the complexities of media concentration in Canada, particularly since Manitoba's largest newspaper, the *Winnipeg Free Press*, the subject of this research's content analysis, is part of a relatively small company, FP Canadian Newspapers Limited Partnership.

Hackett and Zhao (1998) suggest that the Canadian news media have approached public journalism cautiously, experimenting with some of its less "radical" aspects (202). Of highest relevance to this thesis is an initiative undertaken by the *London Free Press* in 1994 that was reminiscent of public journalism. Miller (1998b) details an initiative by the newspaper during a municipal election, in which voters were polled to identify issues important to them. The newspaper then insisted politicians actually address these issues. In addition, the newspaper "launched a public education campaign to improve voter turnout," and witnessed an increase in voters from 33% in average over the last decade to 42% in 1994 (218-219).

Another Canadian initiative is discussed by McKie (2000). In 1995, print, radio and television news media in Alberta joined together to work on a project called "Eyes in Alberta." Developed in reaction to cuts in social services, education and health care spending under the then new government of Ralph Klein, the project was meant to "stimulate a debate about profound changes that would touch the lives of many people" (85). It involved journalists from

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[82] The Pew Center for Civic Journalism stopped operating in 2003, but other foundations still exist that are supportive of civic journalism initiatives in the United States.
[83] Miller is likely referring to the ownership of newspapers at the time by Conrad Black and Hollinger International.

CBC Edmonton, the *Edmonton Journal*, and the *Calgary Herald*, as well as the initiators of the project, several professors from the University of Calgary. The project began with a poll of citizens to gauge reactions to the government's actions. The results from these polls drove three months of research by the parties involved, culminating in a week-long series in the news media entitled "Eyes on Alberta." McKie suggests that the initiative was "almost neo-populist" in its exclusion of politicians in the series; instead, reporters talked to citizens affected by the changes: "the struggle that a Calgary family worried about the future had to endure; the concerns of a mother who lost her job as a dietician and was forced to depend on her parents to help pay for the children's schooling; and civil servants who managed to avoid being laid off, but were struggling with poor morale and increased workloads" (87). One reporter described the initiative as taking the "attitudinal temperature of the province – how we are coping and how our attitudes are changing" (Kerr 1995, as cited in McKie 2000, 87). While those involved denied that "Eyes on Alberta" was an attempt at public journalism, and called it "just good journalism," McKie effectively argues that there were strong similarities, deliberate or not. The initiative created a "deliberative space" for citizens (92), encouraged sustained debate and departed from the traditional beat system by focusing on beats that could more accurately be described as "tolerance, security, community, resilience, enterprise and vices and values" (90). Given the flexible nature of public journalism, it appears that the "Eyes on Alberta" initiative may fall into the public journalism realm.

Other public journalism initiatives have arisen in Canada in the last decade. Notably, in 2006, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation announced that it was creating one-hour regional broadcasts, starting at 6 pm, that would be in the style of "civic journalism." In the online story about the restructuring, CBC News editor-in-chief, Tony Burman, said "CBC will redefine its relationship with its audience…We want to further the local voice that we already hear on our local programs" (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 2006a). Specifics of how the initiative would use "civic journalism" practices were vague in the news story. The initiative was to be piloted in Vancouver, and extended to other regions at a later date.

Oddly, there appears to have been no academic study of this shift by the CBC, and even the corporation's web site makes little mention of the initiative after 2006. The little available commentary is from online blogs at the time of the announcement. Collins (2006) expresses some hopefulness, but also scepticism; for instance, she comments that no new funds were

committed, and that regional reporters would have to fill twice the amount of news space (60 minutes instead of 30 minutes) with the same amount of staff. It is apparent from a "letter from the editor-in-chief," Tony Burman, that "civic journalism" to the CBC involves "user-generated content" (Burman 2006). In fact, in his end-of-year list of significant changes to journalism, Burman suggests that the most significant change in media in 2006 was that viewers were "no longer content to 'stare at the screen'" and were able to "take control of what and how they watch. Viewers/readers/audiences are now contributing photos, videos and content to a number of mainstream media outlets."

In response to an e-mail query to CBC Vancouver on the initiative, Lalonde (2009) explained its status: "The term civic journalism may not be as front and centre as it once was, but the principles are still very important to our Vancouver newsroom. I am the reporter who solicits input via the web to collaborate with the public on stories. It's working well. I've [had] a good number of fresh stories submitted by people…input comes in comment form, video sent to us, pictures sent to us, and I go out and record people who are willing to 'come out from their webtag' and tell us their names and their story." She explains that various other CBC newsrooms have also created their own versions of the format, including Halifax and Toronto. She wrote: "Even if a station does not have the resources to have a full position for citizen journalism, the reporters are attempting to reach the public daily, and have them contribute in a bigger way to the stories being told." November 2009 changes at the CBC, particularly with *The National*, also indicate slight public journalism tendencies. Brown (2009) writes of the changes: "We've launched a National blog, as well as a regular voting and comments feature…Plus, we're featuring some of your comments more prominently on the site."

It is far outside of the scope of the current study to determine to what extent the CBC is conducting public journalism. A few comments can, however, be tentatively put forward:

1) Literature on the US public journalism experience suggests that public journalism involves more than just accepting videos, photos and comments from the audience. For instance, it also involves the creation of constructive dialogue and debate. The National blog could be a move in that direction.

2) Literature on the US experience also suggests that public journalism may require more journalism time and effort (in terms of soliciting views from less common sources, polling the public to gauge the news they wanted covered etc.) than does traditional journalism. It is

consequently doubtful that the CBC could create true public journalism using the same number of reporters as before the "civic journalism" shift, especially after doubling the size of the news hole. While the initiative may have led to more user-generated content, and perhaps user-generated content is not a bad thing – the change might *not* be true public journalism.

3.7.5 How a new journalism might help the press and democracy

Journalism scholars have documented several interrelated problems with newspapers and media in general. The public trust the news less. While many are entertained by the sensational journalism, many others suspect that they are not getting the information they want or need; they feel left out of the democratic process. The news does not adequately represent all voices. Newspaper circulation is declining, particularly due to competing media, though the situation is less severe in Canada. It is possible that public journalism could help alleviate some of these problems by simultaneously informing the public, encouraging the public to get involved, building social capital, increasing public trust in the news media, increasing participation in civil society organizations and, ultimately, strengthening the governance process (see Figure 3.1).

Beginning in the 1990s, journalists experimented with public journalism in order to address these problems. Haas (2007) notes its potential:

> Simply put, by embracing public journalism, management would not only be able to help further citizens' democratic needs but, in all likelihood, also be able to increase circulation figures…and thereby profits on behalf of media owners and advertisers…it would be unrealistic to expect all, or even the majority, of top managers to commit to public journalism solely out of a concern for social responsibility. Thus, pointing out that the twin concerns of social responsibility and profit might in fact be complementary and could substantially increase the number of news organizations practicing public journalism (80).

First, there are indications that some public journalism projects have enhanced citizen interest and participation in democracy in the U.S. Perhaps the most thorough effects research was done by the Pew Charitable Trusts, an organization whose mandate includes "to encourage civic participation" and which funded many public journalism projects (Pew Charitable Trusts n.d.). For example, it conducted a comparison of four US cities in which public journalism was being carried out: Charlotte, San Francisco, Madison and Binghamton. In polling those aware of

the campaigns, it found that between 49% (San Francisco) and 62% (Madison) said that the campaigns had "gotten them to think more about politics," and that between 47% (San Francisco) and 78% (Charlotte) "wanted to be more involved in making this city a better place to live" (Rosen 2007, 271). These findings suggest that the public journalism initiatives under study managed to engage citizens more in democracy, one of the goals of the public journalism movement.

Similarly, another Pew-funded study by Friedland and Nichols (2002) reviewed 651 public journalism projects between 1994 and 2002 and reported promising findings about the effects on social capital, civil society and democracy. Among them were that 53% of the projects led to "an improvement in a community's public deliberative process" (e.g. deliberation events), 40% reported improvements in citizen abilities to "vote, to participate in a debate between candidates, to engage in public deliberations, and to actively work to change community life," 26% reported "the formation of new organizations" and 17% saw increased volunteerism (17-18).

In his review of literature, Haas (2007) also found positive results, writing that public journalism writing has "with few exceptions, been linked to positive effects on citizens' civic knowledge, attitudes and behaviours" (54). These findings include that public journalism can enhance citizen "1) interest in, knowledge of, and concern for…local community problems;…2) trust in others;…3) willingness and perceived ability to take part in public problem-solving activities;… and 4) positive attitudes toward participating news organizations" (55).

Haas adds that "In turn, these positive changes in citizens' civic knowledge and attitudes have been found to enhance citizens' inclination to 1) engage in interpersonal discussion of…local community problems;…2) volunteer for and/or donate money to local civic organizations;…3) establish new civic organizations;…4) contact public officials about local community problems;…5) register to vote;…and 6) vote in elections" (55). Just one example of public journalism helping citizens to obtain answers occurred when the *Charlotte Observer* polled citizens during a 1992 US senatorial election, and discovered that environmental issues

Figure 3.1: Diagram of potential of public journalism

were a topic that readers were concerned about and, therefore, successfully pressured politicians to speak about it earlier than their planned campaign structure had planned. When politicians attempted not to answer the environment-related questions, the newspaper editor replied: "Fine, I will run the questions and I will leave a space under it for you to answer. If you choose not to, we will just say 'would not respond' or we will leave it blank" (Rosen 1999, 53). This story is one example of how a newspaper researched what the public wanted to know, brought the public's questions to political candidates and managed to acquire answers, despite resistance from politicians.[84] This approach, suggests Rosen, is more beneficial to democracy.

However, while there are findings that suggest encouraging effects on governance, social capital and civil society, there are fewer findings about whether or not public journalism could help to reverse newspapers' circulation and monetary problems and, therefore, essentially stop the "death of newspapers". The *Roanake Times* designed an admittedly "non-scientific Daily Reader Report Card," which it likened to Nielsen TV ratings, in which the newspaper surveyed readers about which stories were read, which were read in full and which the readers best liked (Yancey 2000). Findings over three years were that public journalism stories received higher readership, better "ratings" and were more likely to be read in full than conventional journalism stories. Wrote one reader: "Although I don't usually enjoy political articles, your coverage made it interesting enough to read this time. I really considered the issues more this year than ever before" (74). Reader feedback made the newspaper conclude: that "public journalism, done the right way, can drive readership" (62). However, the author did not report any direct changes in circulation or financial numbers.

In fact, Eksterowicz and Roberts (2000) describe how an ancestor of public journalism, the early twentieth century practice of muckraking journalism, failed because its efforts did not increase circulation. Muckraking journalism was a type of investigative or "exposure" journalism that aimed for governmental reform. It shared many of the attributes of public journalism, such as the desire to improve the press – muckrakers criticized mainstream journalism of the time for being too reliant on advertising – and the in-depth discussion of social and governmental problems. However, such investigative journalism was time-consuming and expensive; when circulation figures did not increase, muckraking could not support itself and died (2000).

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[84] Rosen also notes that a conventional journalist might have been tempted to write a story about political strategy and *why* the candidate did not want to discuss the environment until later in the election. However, this type of story would not have given readers the answers they wanted.

Aside from scepticism that public journalism can rescue newspapers from decline, other criticisms have been levied at public journalism. These include that newspapers should remain as objective as possible, and that public journalism is too close to advocacy which in turn, critics argue, lowers a newspaper's credibility (Rosen 1999; Woo 2000); that it is ineffective or even reckless to put the community in control of the news agenda (Case 1994; Hoyt 1995; Rosen 1999; Rosen 1996; Shepard 1994); that many journalists, even those who attempted it, found they did not like it (Gade & Perry 2003; Massey & Haas 2002; Woo 2000; Rosen 1999); that it is not actually a new idea to link journalism and democracy; "It's what good papers have always done." (Rosen 1999, 173; Woodstock 2002; Woo 2000; Gartner 1997); that it is too normative (Rosen 1999; Woo 2000); and that its assertion that the press is disconnected from readers is false (Woo 2000).

One of the responses to these criticisms is that public journalism does not require complete abandonment of mainstream journalism ideals (Arant & Meyer 1998; Eksterowicz & Roberts 2000; Friedland & Nichols 2002; Merritt 1998). Merritt (1998) and Friedland and Nichols (2002) found that many public journalism ideals were compatible, at least in theory, with conventional ones. Voakes (1999) also found strong support for notions of public journalism in a survey of mainstream journalists. In fact, research suggests that the majority of mainstream journalists seem to be "attitudinally comfortable" with some of the less "activist" approaches to public journalism, such as "engaging citizens in community issues" (Massey & Haas 2002, 565), "helping the community," (Arant & Meyer 1998, 211) "reporting on possible trade-offs between alternative solutions" (Haas 2007, 51) or "polling the public to determine the most pressing issues" (Voakes 1999). Mainstream journalists are less comfortable with public journalism practices such as sponsoring town hall meetings (Haas 2007; Voakes 1999). Therefore, it is apparent that at least some elements of public journalism could be applied in various newspapers to engage people in democracy.

3.8 Discussion

This chapter has focused on three key subjects: participatory democracy/good governance, civil society and the news media. The news media are a key node between those with knowledge about environmental situations (e.g. non-profits, government departments, scientists) and the general public. In a democracy that would benefit from greater public

participation, the news media are one of many potential ways in which the general public can gain the knowledge they need to contribute effectively to governance.

In an ideal participatory democracy, perhaps the general public would gain a great deal of information from means other than the news media, such as regular public meetings (that are well-attended), face-to-face interactions, involvement in civil society groups and government attempts to involve and inform the public. However, literature on social capital indicates a decline in community interactions and civil society involvement. Scholars also view some current government attempts to involve the public as token; they may not flow significantly into policy, a situation that places the value of public consultations and other ways in which the government attempts to engage citizens, such as QUANGOs, into question. Literature suggests that interests such as business and industry often overshadow the public and civil society in the policy-making process.

Since the current democratic system allows for such unequal power, and provides limited input opportunities for civil society (both groups and individuals), civil society can perhaps look to the media as an alternative way to carry out "change work." As this chapter discussed, the news media reach a large portion of the population. While newspapers have struggled in recent decades to maintain readership in the face of other information sources (internet, television etc.), they are still important in providing ways in which citizens can access complex information and contribute to public debate through such forms as letters to the editor and opinion pieces. As such, newspapers still have an unmatched ability to contribute to meaningful public debate and learning.

Since the existing form of democracy does not fulfill the idea of "good governance," in which citizens have meaningful and direct input, it is important for civil society to seize upon the opportunity of the news media and aggressively use the tools discussed in section 3.3 that increases its voice in the news media (e.g. information subsidies, letters to the editor, Op-Ed pieces, meetings with gatekeepers). As section 3.6 shows, academic studies have indicated that civil society voices are subdued in the news media, and are generally overpowered by "elite" voices such as government and businesses. News articles appear to be structured to emphasize elite voices. In order to inform citizens adequately, it is imperative that civil society reach out to the news media as a vehicle to carry out environmental education. Civil society should aggressively find ways to increase its prominence (e.g. regularly send out news releases, which

can help them to "define" stories; meet with editorial boards to explain their positions; attempt to have Op-Ed pieces printed).

Unfortunately, there are practical restraints on some civil society organizations' abilities to use the news media. The Canadian *Income Tax Act* restricts any communications activities that might be deemed political. Since, as is explained in Chapter 2, the Lake Winnipeg situation is highly relevant to policy development (e.g. regarding the hog industry, sewage systems, cosmetic fertilizers), this situation may be problematic. Registered charities are unable to express what legal, regulatory and/or policy changes they feel should be put forward, even though they are amongst the most educated stakeholders on the topic, and are arguably less self-interested than industry interests, which are allowed to lobby without restraints. Even non-charities may be limited in their ability to advocate for action and policy if their funding situation controls their activities.

For newspapers to contribute most effectively to good governance, not only does civil society need to be an insistent and willing voice, but also newspapers themselves should fulfill their responsibilities to public education. "Elite prominence" patterns measured by academics indicate that the news media may not be allowing all voices equal access to the news; government, business and scientists have proven to be favoured as sources. Chapter 4 will report on a content analysis of articles in the *Winnipeg Free Press* on Lake Winnipeg, and show whether or not the articles follow this "elite" pattern.

An alternative to the status quo style of journalism is discussed in this chapter – the public journalism movement, which gives civil society higher prominence. While this practice is not without criticisms, it is a reform movement worth considering as a way to improve participatory democracy and good governance via the news media. The onus would, however, be more on the journalism outlets than civil society to bring about this change. While civil society can encourage journalists to move in this direction, the decision is ultimately that of the media. Chapter 6 will discuss the possibilities for Lake Winnipeg coverage. There is some evidence in academic literature on public journalism that the approach can not only improve citizen knowledge and involvement in society, but also that it can also benefit newspapers financially. While official statistics about Canadians newspapers indicate the medium is maintaining strong readership, cutbacks, format changes and general belief within the journalism community (as witnessed by this author) suggest that newspapers may be having difficulties. Some form of

public journalism may be one option for newspapers to increase their relevance in a community, create a niche for themselves that other news media are not filling, and contribute to the betterment of society.

In short, the nexus between civil society and the news media is of great importance, as existing literature suggests that there is an imbalance of voices in news media discussions on societal issues, such as environmental dilemmas. Civil society voices are often not adequately heard, while government and other "elite" sources dominate coverage. The following chapters of this thesis will explore factors that contribute to lower civil society prominence, and put forward possible solutions that could increase balance in discussions and improve governance.

Chapter 4: Content Analysis

Manitoba's largest and arguably most respected daily newspaper,[85] the *Winnipeg Free Press*, was selected as the vehicle for content analysis in this study. In designing this aspect of the research, considerable care was taken to design a content analysis protocol that would yield statistically valid findings. The process and findings are described in this chapter.

4.1 Methodology

4.1.1 Identifying the population

The population of articles studied was identified by searching the *Winnipeg Free Press* archives, available on the database "Factiva", using a detailed search string.[86] Articles from between August 6, 1991[87] and the end of December, 2008, were included in the population. A total of 769 articles were returned for this time period. For easier access, the researcher copied and pasted these articles into Microsoft Word documents, each document containing roughly 100 articles. The articles were also screened for relevance. An article was deemed relevant if one of the main topics was Lake Winnipeg water quality. Of the 769 original articles initially identified, 143 were found to deal with Lake Winnipeg water quality in only a tangential way or not at all.[88] These articles were removed from the population.

At this point, the articles were numbered, the numbers being simply based on the date the articles occurred, from oldest to newest. In addition, the researcher noticed that some of the "articles" returned were actually full "letters to the editor" pages, including all letters published on that day. On 19 occasions, there was more than one letter on the topic of Lake Winnipeg water quality published on that day. Therefore, the researcher assigned the additional letters to

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[85] The other daily newspaper in Winnipeg is the *Winnipeg Sun*, which produces a more tabloid-style of journalism.
[86] The search string used was: "Lake Winnipeg" AND [nutrients OR nutrient pollution OR algae OR phosphorus OR nitrogen OR bloom OR blooms OR nutrient OR pollution OR sewage OR detergent OR run-off OR runoff OR cyanophytes OR cyanophyte OR eutrophication OR hogs OR fertilizer OR wastewater OR organic OR oxygen]
[87] August 6, 1991, was as far back in time as the *Winnipeg Free Press* articles were available on the database. Since few articles were found in the first few years – only 43 articles occurred from 1991 to 1996 – the unavailability of articles prior to 1991 was not seen as a problem. Articles appear to have increased in number beginning in 1997 due to the disastrous flooding of the Red River in that year, commonly known as the "Flood of the Century." Since the Red River flows into Lake Winnipeg, discussions of water quality in the Lake arose.
[88] For instance, due to the use of the word "blooms," in reference to flowers, several articles about flower shows near Lake Winnipeg were returned.

the editor their own numbers, resulting in a total article population of 645. Therefore, the population, N, is 645 for this content analysis study.

4.1.2 Sample selection

        An ideal study would include all articles in the population, in this case 645. However, in media content analysis, time and monetary constraints tend to make whole population studies impractical in many cases (Riffe, Lacy & Fico 2005). Therefore, it is common practice to select a random sample of articles from within the population to represent the population. Write Riffe, Lacy and Fico, "When probability samples (units are randomly chosen) are selected, scholars can make valid inferences about the population of content under study" (95).

        However, it is first necessary to calculate a large enough sample size, or inferences would not be valid.[89] The following formula, commonly used to calculate sample size (*ss*) when a population is unknown or irrelevant, was adopted.[90]

$$ss = \frac{Z^2 * (p) * (1-p)}{c^2}$$

Where *ss* = sample size

        Z = Z value (1.96 for a 95 % confidence level)

        p = percentage picking a choice, expressed as decimal (0.5 was used)

        c = confidence interval, expressed as a decimal (0.05 was used)

        Next, a second formula (*new ss*) was applied to calculate the sample size for the finite population under study in the current research.[91]

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[89] Formulas applied are from Creative Research Systems (n.d.), http://www.surveysystem.com/sample-size-formula.htm.

[90] Calculations for *ss*:

$$ss = \frac{1.96^2 * 0.5 * (1-0.5)}{0.05^2}$$

= 384.16

$$new\ ss = \dfrac{ss}{1 + \dfrac{ss\text{-}1}{pop}}$$

Where pop = population

The sample size calculations indicated that a sample size of 241 was required to represent the population adequately.

It was then necessary to select articles randomly from the population. Sampling requires "every element (unit) in the population [to] have an equal chance of being selected" (Neuendorf 2002, 83). The articles were already numbered from 1 to 645 (called the "sampling frame"), enabling the researcher to use a random numbers table to randomly select 241 articles. Therefore, 241 articles (n) were sampled from N using a random numbers table. This approach is called simple random sampling. The researcher used the "without replacement" technique, because "with replacement" would mean that an article could be included twice, or even more times during the process of selection. Although sampling with replacement "better meets the requirement of every unit having an equal chance of being selected" (84), it seemed illogical to allow some articles to be included twice, or even three times, in a sample with only 241 articles. Therefore, when a number was selected a second time using the random numbers table, the researcher would select another random number until a non-duplicate was selected. As a result, 241 distinct units were studied in the sample.

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[91] Calculations for *new ss*:

$$new\ ss = \dfrac{384.16}{1 + \dfrac{384.16\text{-}1}{645}}$$

=241

4.1.3 Designing the content analysis protocol

Once the researcher had familiarized herself with the population of articles, she developed the content analysis protocol, a detailed instruction booklet describing how articles should be coded (see Appendix I). Various authors offer advice on how to create such a protocol, and the resulting protocol for this research was an amalgamation of their recommended techniques (Altheide 1996; Krippendorff 2004; Neuendorf 2002; Riffe, Lacy & Fico 2005). Definitions were developed for key terms to ensure that coding was based on a consistent understanding of such essential terms as "source" and "civil society." Twenty-four variables were then decided upon to record various aspects of the articles, from simple facts such as the years in which they were published, to less explicit ones, such as whether or not an "actor" from civil society was used as a source. Where possible, variables were categorized so that data could be entered later in numerical form in SPSS 11.5. Detailed instructions were given on how to code each variable, and the researcher attempted to anticipate possible problem areas and address them in instructions.

In order to pre-test these variables, the researcher periodically applied drafts of the protocol to articles not included in the sample population. These "practice sessions" helped to identify flaws in the protocol, and helped the researcher refine the variables and produce a final draft of the content analysis protocol. For instance, "practice sessions" were key to finessing protocol for coding variable 22, which recorded whether or not an "actor" or "defining source" existed in an article. As a result of this pre-testing, the researcher was able to reflect on difficulties in her own coding during pre-testing and provide a more detailed explanation to the coder hired for the inter-coder analysis, a procedure described in the following section.

4.1.4 Inter-coder reliability

Before the full content analysis could be carried out, reliability had to be established to prove that the content analysis protocol would yield the same results, regardless of who was conducting the analysis. While the researcher intended on carrying out the analysis for the full sample, a second coder was hired and trained to carry out coding of 16% of the articles ($n = 39$)[92]

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[92] There is no agreement in content analysis literature on what percentage of articles an inter-coder reliability test should study. Percentages in other studies range from fairly low amounts, such as 3 % (Taylor, Lee & Davie 2000) and 6 % (Carpenter 2007) to higher percentages, such as 27 %. Riffe, Lacy and Fico (2005) report that Wimmer and

in order to establish what is commonly called "intercoder reliability" (see, for example, Neuendorf 2002). Neuendorf notes that "even if the principal investigator does all of the coding, a reliability check with a second coder is needed" (142).

Krippendorff (2004) suggests that someone with little expertise in the field of study be the second coder. Therefore, an individual with a Bachelor's of English who has no formal background in media studies, journalism, statistics or environmental studies was hired. Two training sessions were held in which the coder was taught how to apply the coding protocol and use the coding sheets. Practice coding was carried out on articles that were not in the study sample. When the researcher was comfortable with the coder's understanding of the protocol and the coder felt adequately confident, coding on n began.

The researcher and coder carried out the coding separately, each filling out a Coding Sheet (see Appendix II) for every article. The sheets were then collected and coding data entered into SPSS 11.5.

First, the researcher calculated "raw percentage agreement," or "the measure of crude association" (Neuendorf 2002, 148), which is the percentage of how often the coding agrees. The calculation for this agreement is:

$PA_O = A/n$

Where PA_O = "proportion agreement, observed";

     A   = "the number of agreements between the two coders"; and

     n = "the total number of units the two coders have coded for the test" (149)

Results can range from .00 (no agreement) to 1.00 (perfect agreement).

Raw percentage agreement for the study data ranged from 0.88 for variable 13d (agreement in attribution of Source 5) to 1.00, or perfect agreement, for numerous variables, such as date, year and section. Raw percentage agreements of word counts were not calculated, as in many cases the recorded word counts differed by only one or two words, but would not have

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Dominick (2003) suggest that between 10 and 25 % of the material be tested, while Kaid and Wadsworth (1989) recommend only 5 to 7 %. A choice in the middle of this range, 16 %, seemed appropriate.

been recorded as agreements, or near agreements, in a raw percentage calculation. Therefore, word counts were calculated using covariance, discussed below. Appendix III reports raw percentage agreement figures for variables.

Most content analysis experts do not accept raw percentage agreement as adequate proof of inter-coder reliability because it does not account for chance.. Rather, they suggest calculating both raw percentage *and* a coefficient for reliability that takes chance into account (Krippendorff 2004; Neuendorf 2002; Riffe, Lacy & Fico 2005).[93]

Therefore, content analysts have developed various coefficients that account for chance. Two different covariants were applied, Scott's *pi* for nominal (categorical) data and Pearson *r* for scale data, the word counts. The formula for Scott's *pi* is:

$$pi = PA_o - PA_E / 1 - PA_E$$

Where PA_o = "proportion agreement, observed"; and

PA_E = "proportion agreement, expected by chance" (Neuendorf 2002, 151).

One formula[94] for Pearson *r* is:

$$r_{AB} = \frac{\Sigma ab}{\sqrt{\left(\Sigma a^2\right)\left(\Sigma b^2\right)}}$$

Where a = "each deviation score (Coder A score minus mean for A)"; and

b = "each deviation score (Coder B score minus mean for B)" (157)

While the researcher coded raw percentage agreements manually, the coefficients *pi* and *r* were calculated using a Program for Reliability Assessment with Multiple Coders (PRAM). Measurements ranged from 0.562 at the lowest, for variable 12d (word counts for source 4) to 1.0, or perfect agreement, for numerous variables.

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[93] Krippendorff (2004) sees almost no use for raw percentage agreement, and prefers to use exclusively coefficients.
[94] Numerous formulas are provided for Pearson *r*. The given formula is from Neuendorf (2002).

As noted by Neuendorf (2002), there is considerable disagreement about what levels of intercoder reliability indicate acceptable and usable measurements. Generally, coefficients measuring higher than 0.80 are believed to indicate high reliability, while some authors (Frey, Botan & Kreps 2000, as cited in Neuendorf 2002; Riffe, Lacy & Fico 2005) also accept figures between 0.70 and 0.80. Krippendorff (2004) suggests that reliabilities within 0.667 and 0.80 should only be used "for drawing tentative conclusions" (241).

The majority of measurements (29 out of 35) generated by the intercoder reliability analysis measured higher than 0.80, as detailed in Appendix IV.

Possible problems were evident in the reliability measurements for word counts attributed to various sources in the articles. Coders were instructed to count the number of words attributed, directly or through paraphrasing, to each source. Reliability figures were higher than 0.70 for four of these measurements and can be accepted as fairly reliable. However, variable 12d ($r =$ 0.562), words attributed to the fourth sources in the stories, and variable 13d ($r = 0.63$), words attributed to the fifth sources, were low enough to cause concern. Fortunately, closer examination of the data revealed why the measurement was so low: they were skewed by small sample sizes. Variable 13d was based upon only 6 word counts. In other words, only 6 of the 39 articles in the analysis had 5 or more sources. The coders actually agreed perfectly on 4 out of the 6 word counts. However, the other two word counts differed by 48 and 88 words, thereby greatly decreasing reliability. These differences in word counts reflect a problem that had already been noted and even expected by the researcher: that word counts would at times vary between the coders due to difficulty determining when information was paraphrased from a source. The second coder also noted this problem on one of the coding sheets under variable 24; she wrote: "so much information appears to have been paraphrased, but it is hard to determine which. It is interspersed with quotes". Given that the coefficient was calculated using only 6 numbers, the effect of this disagreement appears to have been overemphasized. Significant differences between word counts also occurred several times for words attributed to the first sources in the stories (variable 9d), but since the calculations were based on 34 measurements rather than 6, reliability was still acceptable at 0.781.

The coefficient for 13c, attribution of source 5, was also low at 0.689, apparently due to the low quantity of measurements; while the coders disagreed only once, this one disagreement

decreased the coefficient considerably. Since coefficients for attribution of all other sources were acceptable, the variable can be considered valid.

Finally, the reliability for variable 22a, which asks "Is someone the obvious 'actor'…in this article?" should be briefly discussed, because its result was perhaps a bit low at $r = 0.77$. The term "actor," also referred to as "defining source," is defined and discussed in section 3.6.5 of this thesis. The researcher noted in the coding protocol that this variable may be more difficult to record than others, since newspaper articles do not often state explicitly how an article came about. Riffe, Lacy and Fico (2005) discuss how "manifest" variables often achieve higher reliability than "latent" ones, such as this one, but also note that "the most manifest content is not always the most interesting or significant" (125). The researcher views the "actor" variable as significant, since it is an indication of which groups or individuals manage to get their messages into the news. To help counter reliability risks, detailed instructions on how to decide this variable were given in the protocol. A somewhat lower than ideal reliability for this variable was anticipated; indeed, given the often latent nature of the variable, reliability attained was actually better than the researcher expected.

4.2 Hypotheses and Content Analysis Findings

The literature review in Chapter 3 raised some pertinent questions about how source selection in newspapers can either contribute to or detract from good governance. If there is a tendency in mainstream journalism culture to use traditional, "elite" sources, due to both time and cost constraints (if traditional sources are the most media-savvy and accessible, for instance), as well as engrained practices taught in journalism schools, how might these tendencies be reflected in news coverage? What do they mean for good governance? If civil society sources are available for an issue, as they are for Lake Winnipeg water quality, do journalists consult them frequently as sources and in a prominent manner? If civil society sources are not as frequently consulted in "hard" news as traditional sources, has civil society penetrated into other types of news (Op-Eds, letters to editor)?

This content analysis indicates the frequency and prominence with which the *Winnipeg Free Press* included civil society sources in all types of newspaper pieces. The interview and discussion chapters further explore these findings based on perspectives shared by civil society interviewees.

To determine how the *Winnipeg Free Press* included civil society in its coverage on Lake Winnipeg water quality, variables for the content analysis were designed to record information that would help prove or disprove the following hypotheses:

H1) That civil society will be represented less prominently than traditional "elite" sources, particularly government, scientists and business/industry;

H2) That civil society will be the "actor" or "defining source"[95] of a story less often than traditional sources; and

H3) That civil society will try to find a voice via newspaper pieces that are not "hard news", such as letters to the editor, focus pieces and Op-Eds.

The rationale for H1 is that existing academic literature suggests that, within journalism in general, a pattern of "elite" source dominance, and prominence over other sources, exists. To discuss the implications for Lake Winnipeg governance, it is first necessary to measure whether or not that pattern holds true for newspaper coverage on Lake Winnipeg.

The rationale for H2 is similar to that of H1; there is evidence in academic literature that "elite" sources are more successful at defining news stories than are their non-traditional counterparts. Again, such a pattern in coverage on Lake Winnipeg must be proven before implications for governance can be discussed.

The rationale for H3 is that if, as H1 and H2 investigate, civil society is less likely to be covered in "hard" news articles than traditional sources, it may attempt to gain access to the reading public through alternative routes. As discussed in the literature review, existing

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[95] As the content analysis protocol emphasizes, the concept of an "actor" or a "defining source" of a news article is a bit problematic. It should be noted that academic study does exist on who "defines" news stories, as detailed in section 3.6.5. The fact that such literature exists suggests the measurement is valid, if taken properly. Concerns do arise, however. For instance, while section 3.6.5 did note that the first source is *often* the defining source, this study did not assume that the first source was *always* the defining source. The content analysis protocol (Appendix I) explains to coders how to identify whether or not there is a defining source. These precautions hopefully alleviate any concerns about the term. The matter of interest is who frames or drives the story (or who the journalist framed as the "actor" or "driver" of the story – the journalist may not even do so consciously, and the sources have little control over how they are portrayed in articles).

literature, particularly popular literature, indicates that civil society may have greater success at accessing sections that are not "hard" news.

Results

4.2.1: H1 findings

H1) That civil society will be represented less prominently than traditional "elite" sources, such as government and scientists

H1 was supported to some degree in several aspects of prominence investigated, most notably through placement in articles (e.g. first source, last source), word counts and manner of attribution. Civil society was also less likely to be a source on the first page of the newspaper than most traditional sources.

Statistically, civil society – including non-governmental organizations and community organizations – represented 13.1% of sources (n = 715)[96] throughout all the articles (see Table 4.1), compared to a total of 47.4% for total governmental sources (8.5% municipal, 26.9% provincial, 8.2% federal, 3.8% foreign).[97] The difference between civil society groups and government as sources was, therefore, 34.3%, supporting H1 at its most basic level.

Scientists, a traditional elite source, however, were less frequently used as sources compared to civil society organizations; scientists not affiliated with government or civil society groups represented 8.3% of sources.[98]

Depending on one's definition of civil society, individual residents not affiliated with civil society organizations could also be considered part of civil society at large. Citizen sources represented 6.9% of sources.

In addition, an argument could be made that some joint governmental entities include civil society members on their boards of directors and, as such, could be classified as somewhat representative of civil society voices. The Red River Basin Commission, which has three non-governmental representatives on its 41-member board, and the Lake Winnipeg Stewardship

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[96] There were a total of 715 sources recorded in all the articles in the sample.
[97] Tally does not add up to 47.4% due to rounding.
[98] A further 2.7% of sources were scientists affiliated with non-governmental organizations. In a way, they represented both civil society and the scientific community. Those scientists reported in the text represent those that are not directly affiliated with civil society groups, most of them being affiliated instead with universities or, in several cases being retired scientists. The coder did not record when a government representative was a scientist, as the backgrounds of government sources were not always available.

Table 4.1: Source Usage by Category - all Source Positions (n = 715)(a)

		Frequency	Percent
Source Type	Municipal elected government	41	5.7%
	Municipal non-elected government	20	2.8%
	Provincial elected government	103	14.4%
	Provincial opposition party	27	3.8%
	Provincial non-elected government	62	8.7%
	Federal elected government	28	3.9%
	Federal non-elected government	31	4.3%
	Foreign government	27	3.8%
	Scientist(s)	59 (19)(c)	8.3% (10.9%)
	Single business (non-farming)	18	2.5%
	Industry group	30	4.2%
	Crown corporation	6	.9%
	Civil society group	94(b)	13.1%
	Judge, court document	3	.4%
	Joint governmental entity	32	4.5%
	Farmer(s)	17	2.4%
	Citizen(s)	49	6.9%
	Fisherman/woman	15	2.1%
	Clean Environment Commission	14	2.0%
	First Nations government	1	.1%
	Other	38	5.3%
	Total	715	100.0% (d)

a In 216 articles, there were 715 sources. Twenty-five articles in the 241-article sample had no sources.
b 19 of these sources were originally coded as "scientists/civil society hybrid." In the text, these sources are at times discussed as part of the "Scientist(s)" source category.
c The 19 in parentheses refer to scientific sources speaking for civil society groups.
d Totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.

Board, which has representation from several civil society organizations, as well as residents, were the most common examples of this source type. Another joint governmental entity, the International Joint Commission, includes civil society in other ways, for instance by inviting civil society groups and individuals to participate in public meetings (International Joint Commission 2009). In total, joint governmental entities were 4.5% of sources. An interesting discussion could certainly be developed around how joint governmental entities contribute to governance via the media and whether or not they should be considered part of civil society. However, in the current analysis, they will be categorized separately, as they would otherwise need to be tallied as representing both governmental and as civil society sources, which would lead to total percentages over 100%.

It was anticipated that traditional sources would have higher prominence in the "first source" position compared to non-traditional sources, since existing academic studies have detected such a pattern in other newspapers. However, in this case government, a traditional elite source, was not cited more in the first source position than it was used over all source positions, a finding that does not support H1. While on average government was a source 47.4% of the time, it was the first source 45.8%[99] of the time, a difference of 1.6% (see Table 4.2). The provincial level of government did see higher prominence, however, representing 28.7%[100] (see Table 4.3) of first sources; averaged over all its source placements, the provincial government actually represented only 26.9% of sources (see Table 4.4), a difference of 1.8%. Therefore, the provincial government had slightly higher prominence, being more likely to be in the first source position than other source positions. Scientists[101] also saw higher saliency than their overall usage would expect, being 11.1% of first sources, whereas their average use over all source positions was 8.3%, a difference of 2.8%.

Business and industry, sometimes viewed as "elite" sources, were not more likely to be placed as the first source, representing 2.3% of first sources in total. Overall, they represent 6.7% of sources, a difference of 4.4%. This finding does not support H1.

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[99] This statistic represents municipal, provincial, federal and foreign government, both elected and non-elected.
[100] This calculation represents both elected (17.6%) and non-elected (10.2%) sources from the provincial government, including those from government departments. In addition, cases in which an opposing provincial party was used a source are also included (0.9%)
[101] This statistic only includes scientists who were not counted as part of civil society or government. The data record an additional 3.7% of first sources which were scientists affiliated with civil society organizations. This 3.7% was added to the general statistic for civil society organizations in the main text of this paper, since scientists were often the spokespeople for several civil society organizations.

Still, civil society groups had slightly lower prominence as first sources. Civil society organizations were the first source in 12% of the articles studied, but for all source placements represented 13.1%, a difference of 1.1%. Therefore, civil society did see lower prominence in terms of source placement compared to what would be expected if all source usages were distributed evenly, though this difference is quite small. This statistic, therefore, only weakly supports H1.

Academic literature and communications theory suggest that later source placement equates to lower prominence. Therefore, the last source quoted in an article could be considered the least prominent. Civil society saw over-representation as last sources in articles, representing 16.6% of last sources, whereas civil society was only 13.1% of sources (over *all* source placements), a difference of 3.5%. This finding supports H1. Other source types also saw higher prevalence as last sources (see Table 4.5), but civil society was by far the most "over-represented" as last sources. As H1 hypothesized, scientists and government were also less likely to be in the last source position, seeing differences of 0.6% and 2.4%, respectively, between

Table 4.2: Source Frequencies in First Source Position

		Over all articles	As first source	Difference
Source type	Government	47.4%	45.8%	-1.6%
	Scientist(s)	8.3%	11.1%	2.8%
	Business/industry group	6.7%	2.3%	-4.4%
	Civil society group	13.1%	12.0%	-1.1%
	Citizen(s)	6.9%	6.9%	.0%
	Other[a]	17.6%	21.9%	4.3%
	Total[b]	100.0%	100.0%	

[a.] "Other" includes all other source types that are not considered key to the discussion of elite and non-elite sources. These "other" source types are listed fully in Table 5.1.

[b.] Totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.

Table 4.3: Source 1 Usage by Level of Government

		Usage as source 1
Source type	Municipal government	7.9%
	Provincial government	28.7%
	Federal government	6.9%
	Foreign government	2.3%
	Total	45.8%

Table 4.4: Overall Usage of Government Sources (All Source Placements)

		Usage as source 1
Source type	Municipal government	8.5%
	Provincial government	26.9%
	Federal government	8.3%
	Foreign government	3.8%
	Total	47.5%

Table 4.5: Source Frequencies in Last Source Position (n = 169)[a]

		Over all articles	As last source	Difference
Source type	Government	47.4%	45.0%	-2.4%
	Scientist(s)	8.3%	7.7%	-.6%
	Business/industry group	6.7%	8.3%	1.6%
	Civil society group	13.1%	16.6%	3.5%
	Citizen(s)	6.9%	4.1%	-2.8%
	Other[b]	17.6%	18.3%	.7%
	Total[c]	100.0%	100.0%	

[a.] There are only 169 units in this calculation because 72 articles had 0 or 1 sources. Therefore, there were no "last sources" to count for these articles.

[b.] "Other" includes all other source types that are not considered key to the discussion of elite and non-elite sources. These "other" source types are listed fully in Table 5.1.

[c.] Totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.

overall source usage and last source usage. Findings for the category of business/industry groups, however, did not support the hypothesis that they would be under-represented less in later source positions; rather, they had a higher chance of being in last source position, by a difference of 1.6%. It should be noted that the number of business/industry sources was quite low; since they represent only 6.7% of all sources, conclusions based on their distribution throughout the articles could be misleading. However, the somewhat low percentages of business sources suggest they are not prominent in Lake Winnipeg articles, period, which does not support H1. However, all other source placements in last source position do support H1. In particular, the over-representation of civil society as a last source is important.

Placement amongst the pages of a newspaper also contributes to prominence. The frequency by which each type of source is 1) the first source on *page one* (source 1 on page 1 being considered the most prominent possible placement); and 2) the article "actor" throughout the pages (earlier actor placement being considered more prominent).[102] The data show that government is attributed higher prominence than non-elite sources via a higher chance of

Table 4.6: First Source Frequencies on First Page

		Over all articles, first source position	As first source on page 1 (n = 40)	Difference
Source type	Government	45.8%	47.5%	1.7%
	Scientist(s)	11.1%	5.0%	-6.1%
	Business/industry group	2.3%	5.0%	2.7%
	Civil society group	12.0%	7.5%	-4.5%
	Citizen(s)	6.9%	7.5%	.6%
	Other[a]	21.9%	27.5%	5.6%
	Total[b]	100.0%	100.0%	

a. "Other" includes all other source types that are not considered key to the discussion of elite and non-elite sources. These "other" source types are listed fully in Table 5.1.

b. Totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.

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[102] The researcher also considered studying source placement by section of the newspaper (A, B, C etc.) but could find no literature discussing the relative saliency of the sections. Most of the articles appeared in sections A and B. Only 2.8% of articles were in sections C, D, E and F, which are the "softer" sections (e.g. entertainment) and arguably consist of less "saliently placed" news, making the sample size so small in these categories that it was not possible to make reliable observations about source usage over these less prominent sections of the newspaper.

placement as the first source on page 1. Amongst first sources on page 1 (n = 40),[103] government was in first source position 47.5% of the time on the front page, compared to 45.8 % of the time as first source over *all* articles, a difference of 1.7% (see Table 4.6). Civil society groups were the first source 7.5% of the time compared to 13.1% of time as sources in general. This difference of 4.5% of civil society organizations as source 1 on page 1, compared to civil society organizations as source 1 *throughout* the pages, supports H1. This placement makes civil society less prominent. Indeed, civil society groups were the most under-represented as a first source on page 1.

Business/industry sources also saw higher saliency on page 1; they were the first source 5% of the time on page 1, compared to 2.3% of first sources overall, a difference of 2.7%. Scientists were the first sources 5% of the time on page 1 articles, compared to 11.1% of first sources in all articles considered, a difference of 6.1%. Citizens saw slightly higher chances of being first sources on page 1. Taken alone, these findings that civil society was less likely to be the first source on page one than it was over *all* the pages of the newspaper, and that government and business were more frequently the first sources on page 1 seem insignificant, particularly since the data related to the usage of scientist and citizen sources on the front page did not provide support for H1. However, considered with other findings in this section, a pattern that civil society was attributed lower prominence is still emerging. Civil society groups were still, as H1 hypothesizes, found to be *under-represented* as a first source in all articles, and were even more unlikely to be the first source on the first page of the newspaper. However, they were the most *over-represented* as last sources. Admittedly, the statistics are not particularly dramatic, but they still support H1.

The number of words attributed to sources can also be considered a measurement of saliency. Sources that are given fewer words (e.g. 1-50) can be considered less prominent than sources given more words (e.g. 200), because sources that "take up more space" with more words could be more likely to be noticed by the reader. In order for H1 to be supported, non-traditional sources would be given fewer words in the articles than traditional sources.

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[103] Forty of the articles in the sample were from page 1 of the newspaper.

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Table 4.7: Average Word Counts by Source	
Source	Words
1	152
2	82
3	73
4	60
5	69
6	57
7	43
8	28 [a]
9	92
10	29
Last	69 [b]

[a.] It should be noted that later source counts to create the average calculated using 216 counts, S2 with with 98, S5 with 58, S6 with 30, S7 with 3 and S10

[b.] The Last Source calculation was sources of articles with two or more with only one source were not included

A comparison of average first source word counts and average last source word counts provides support for H1. An analysis of word counts for first sources (which civil society groups are less likely to be) compared to those for last sources (which civil society groups are more likely to be) shows that the average word count for first sources was 152 words, while the average word count for last sources was 69 words. In other words, first sources were given 2.2 times more space in articles than were last sources. Perhaps not surprisingly, first sources were given significantly more words on average than any other source placement (see Table 4.7).

The statistics can further be analyzed by categories created for word counts (1 to 50; 51 to 100 etc.). First sources were limited to 50 words or less only 19.4% of the time, whereas last sources had 50 words or less 49.7% of the time. Last sources were given more than 201 words only 3.6% of the time, whereas first sources were given 201 or more words 26% of the time. Tables 4.8 and 4.9 illustrate this difference between first sources and last sources.

As explained earlier, traditional sources were somewhat more likely to be given first source placement and civil society was less likely to be given first source placement, particularly on articles on the first page, whereas civil society saw higher than average placement as a last source. Therefore, it could be speculated that civil society was, over all, given fewer words in the articles than would be statistically expected if all sources were treated equally.

The data also show how word counts were distributed throughout the articles. As Table 4.10 details, citizens and civil society organization sources had most word counts in the 1 to 100 words range, at 83.7% and 70.7%, respectively. The 1 to 100 word count category equates to lesser prominence. This finding provides support for H1. However, it should be noted that government sources also had a high percentage of word counts in the 1 to 100 range, at 70.2%.

Business/industry and scientist(s), two "elite" source categories, had the lowest amount of word counts in the 1 to 100 range, at 68.8% and 62.5% respectively. Table 4.10 shows that civil society organizations and citizens also had lower prominence in the 101 to 200 word count category compared to "elite" source types, a finding which supports H1. There was less support for H1 in the 201 to 300 words category, with civil society organizations and citizens having higher percentages (8% and 6.1%, respectively) than the traditional sources of government and business (5.3% and 4.2%), though the elite source category of scientists did have higher prominence in this category, at 11.1%. The findings for word counts over 300 words also support H1, with civil society organization sources having 301+ words only 2.7% of the time, and citizens 0%.[104]

The data for manner of attribution (direct quotes or paraphrases) provided some support for H1, but not an overwhelming amount. Civil society organizations were quoted directly 53.3% of the time, and citizens were quoted directly 55.1% of the time (see Table 4.11). These "civil society" sources were, therefore, more likely to be directly quoted than "elite" governmental sources (at 49.3%), but slightly less likely than scientific sources (at 56.4%), and significantly less likely than business/industry sources (at 64.6%).

Overall, the differences between traditional and non-traditional source prominence were not immense in the data for H1 and, taken alone, few of the statistics just discussed are striking. However, taken together, the overall statistics appear to support H1. The data suggest a pattern whereby civil society had a less prominent role as a source in *Winnipeg Free Press* coverage between 1991 and 2008.

4.2.2: H2 findings

H2) That civil society will be the "actor" or "defining source" of a story less often than traditional sources;

H2 received considerable support from the data. Civil society groups were the main "actors" of stories 10.4% of the time for the 241 units studied (see Table 4.12). Other categories

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[104] This statistic excludes letters to the editor, as letter writers were not considered "sources."

Table 4.8: First Source Word Counts			
		Frequency	Percent
Word count	1 to 50	40	19.4%
	51 to 100	55	25.5%
	101 to 150	38	17.6%
	151 to 200	27	12.5%
	201 to 250	20	9.3%
	251 to 300	14	6.5%
	300+	22	10.2%
	Total	216	100.0%[a]

a. Total may not be 100 due to rounding

Table 4.9: Last Source Word Counts			
		Frequency	Percent
Word count	1 to 50	84	49.7%
	51 to 100	53	31.4%
	101 to 150	18	10.7%
	151 to 200	8	4.7%
	201 to 250	2	1.2%
	251 to 300	2	1.2%
	301+	2	1.2%
	Total	169	100.0%[a]

a. Total may not be 100 due to rounding

Table 4.10: Word Counts by Source Category

		Word counts			
		1 to 100	101 to 200	201 to 300	300+
Source type	Government	70.2%	21.2%	5.3%	3.2%
	Business/industry	68.8%	25.0%	4.2%	2.1%
	Scientist(s)	62.5%	19.4%	11.1%	6.9%
	Civil society organization	70.7%	18.7%	8.0%	2.7%
	Citizen(s)	83.7%	10.2%	6.1%	.0%

Table 4.11: Attribution by Source Type

		Attribution	
		Direct	Paraphrase
Source type	Government	49.3%	50.7%
	Scientist(s)	56.4%	43.6%
	Business/industry	64.6%	35.4%
	Civil society group	53.3%	46.7%
	Citizen(s)	55.1%	44.9%

Table 4.12: Actor Frequencies in Article Sample		
		Percent
Actor type	Government	20.3%
	Scientist(s)	4.6%
	Business/industry	2.9%
	Civil society group	10.4%
	Citizen(s)	13.3%
	Other	5.8%
	Free Press writer/employee	17.0%
	Freelance writer	3.7%
	None	22.0%
	Total[a]	100.0%
a. Totals may not be 100 due to rounding		

that could be considered part of civil society included citizens at 13.3%, many of which were "actors" via letters to the editor, a fact which will be discussed in section 4.2.3. Public journalism theory supports letters to the editor, as they are a valuable way for citizens to express their views, but theory would also suggest that citizens should drive coverage beyond this one-page section. Also, letters to the editor usually respond to coverage, rather than drive/define coverage of topics. Public journalism theory presses for citizens defining coverage more.

Table 4.12 details that amongst possible "elite" sources, government (municipal, provincial, federal or foreign) represented the actor 20.3% of the time, scientists 4.6% and business/industry 2.9%, for a total of 27.8% "elite" sources defining the stories. The total of civil society sources – civil society groups and citizens – defining the stories equalled 23.7% percent. With these calculations, there was only a difference of 4.1% between articles with "elite" story drivers and civil society story drivers, which suggests that civil society may be getting nearly equal opportunity to define stories. However, the statistics for H3 will suggest that civil society often had to find a voice in letters to the editor and later page numbers, less prominent positions in the newspaper.

The most telling statistic about "actors" is provided in Table 4.13, which differentiates between those articles in which the newspaper itself was a controlling force (in terms of selection of article framing, story selection etc.) and those with less control by the newspaper, notably letters to the editor and Op-Ed pieces.[105] Pieces over which the newspaper was deemed a controlling force were "hard news" articles, editorials and columns by Free *Press staff*. In other words, this category includes those pieces *written* by a *Free Press* journalist, editor or columnist. The data show that pieces under the newspaper's control were much more likely to use an elite source as an "actor." Of pieces in which government was an actor, 89.8% of these were written by newspaper staff, for scientists 81.8% and for business/industry 71.4%. In contrast,

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[105] As I discuss elsewhere, there is some control exerted by the newspaper on even letters to the editor and Op-Ed pieces, as the newspaper *selects* which letters and Op-Eds to publish.

Table 4.13: Actors in Different Types of Articles

		Created by newspaper (hard news, news briefs, editorials, staff columns)	Not created by newspaper (letters to editor, Op-Ed pieces)
Actor category	Government	89.8%	10.2%
	Scientist(s)	81.8%	18.2%
	Business/industry	71.4%	28.6%
	Civil society organization	60.0%	40.0%
	Citizen(s)	15.6%	84.4%
	Other	78.6%	21.4%
	Free Press writer	100.0%	.0%
	Freelance column writer	.0%	100.0%
	No Actor	86.8%	13.2%

of pieces in which civil society organizations were actors, only 60% were written by Winnipeg Free Press staff, and only 15.6% in which citizens were actors. Of articles in which civil society organizations were "actors," 40% were in letters to the editor or Op-Eds, and nearly 85% of pieces in which citizens were "actors" were letters or Op-Eds.[106]

An interesting observation can be made over time about who the actors were in the pieces. Prior to 2001, civil society groups and citizens were more likely to be actors in stories than were "elite" actors (government, scientists and business/industry); from 1991-2000, civil society and citizens brought Lake Winnipeg water quality to reader attention 14 times in the sample (7 of these times was in the year 2000), whereas elite sources did so only 3 times (figure not shown). Therefore, it appears that in the 1990s and in the year 2000, civil society was a greater impetus for the topic to appear in the *Winnipeg Free Press* than were elite sources. After 2000, this statistic reversed; between 2001 and 2008, elite sources were the actors in 64 stories, and civil society groups and citizens in 42 (see Figure 4.1). Explanations for this finding could be that 1) government started to pass more regulations and guidelines about water quality in the early 2000s; and 2) scientists may have been publishing more findings about the lake. Still, it

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[106] A breakdown of pieces by article type is also provided in Table 4.14.

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was also in the 2000s that many civil society groups formed around the topic of Lake Winnipeg water quality, and that of its tributaries. The experience of some of these groups with the media will be discussed in Chapter 5 and 6.

The ways in which different actor types were distributed over the pages of the newspaper was also considered. When a government, civil society group, organization or other actor wants to communicate a message to the public via newspapers, it is beneficial for the article in which the government, civil society group or organization is the defining source to be on page one (Gutstein & Hackett 1998). The findings from the current study suggested that civil society had lower penetration as an "actor" on the earlier pages of the newspaper. In total, 40 articles in the study appeared on page 1 of the newspaper. Only 2.5% had civil society as an actor (see Figure 4.2), compared to 10.4% overall, a considerable gap of 7.9%. A total of 7.5% had a citizen as an actor, compared to 13.3% overall, a difference of 5.8%. This lower chance of civil society being an actor on page 1 relative to its overall chances of being the actor supports H2.
A total of 22.5% of page 1 articles had government as an actor (compared to 20.3% overall), 5% had scientists as an actor (compared to 4.6% overall) and 7.5% had business as an actor (compared to 2.9% overall). Therefore, all elite actors had a slightly higher than statistically expected[107] chance of being the actor on page 1, business actors having the greatest penetration onto this page, relative to the number of times they were actors in all stories. This finding supports H2. Figure 4.3 further illustrates that the chance of civil society and citizens as actors *increased* later in the pages of the newspaper; citizens were much more likely to be actors between pages 11 and 15, where the letters to the editor section usually was.[108] Civil society groups were actors throughout the newspaper pages, but their frequency peaked around pages 14 to 16. This increase is in part due to the fact that civil society often accessed the news agenda through letters to the editor and focus pieces, a topic discussed in the following section.

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[107] In other words, the elite actors had a higher chance of being an actor on page 1 relative to their chances of being actors on other pages. Their usage as actors was not spread evenly throughout the pages.

[108] In the sample, the letters to the editor section occurred as early as page 4. However, the vast majority of letters appear between pages 11 and 16.

Figure 4.1: Actor Frequency From 1993-2008

Figure 4.2: Actors in First Page Articles
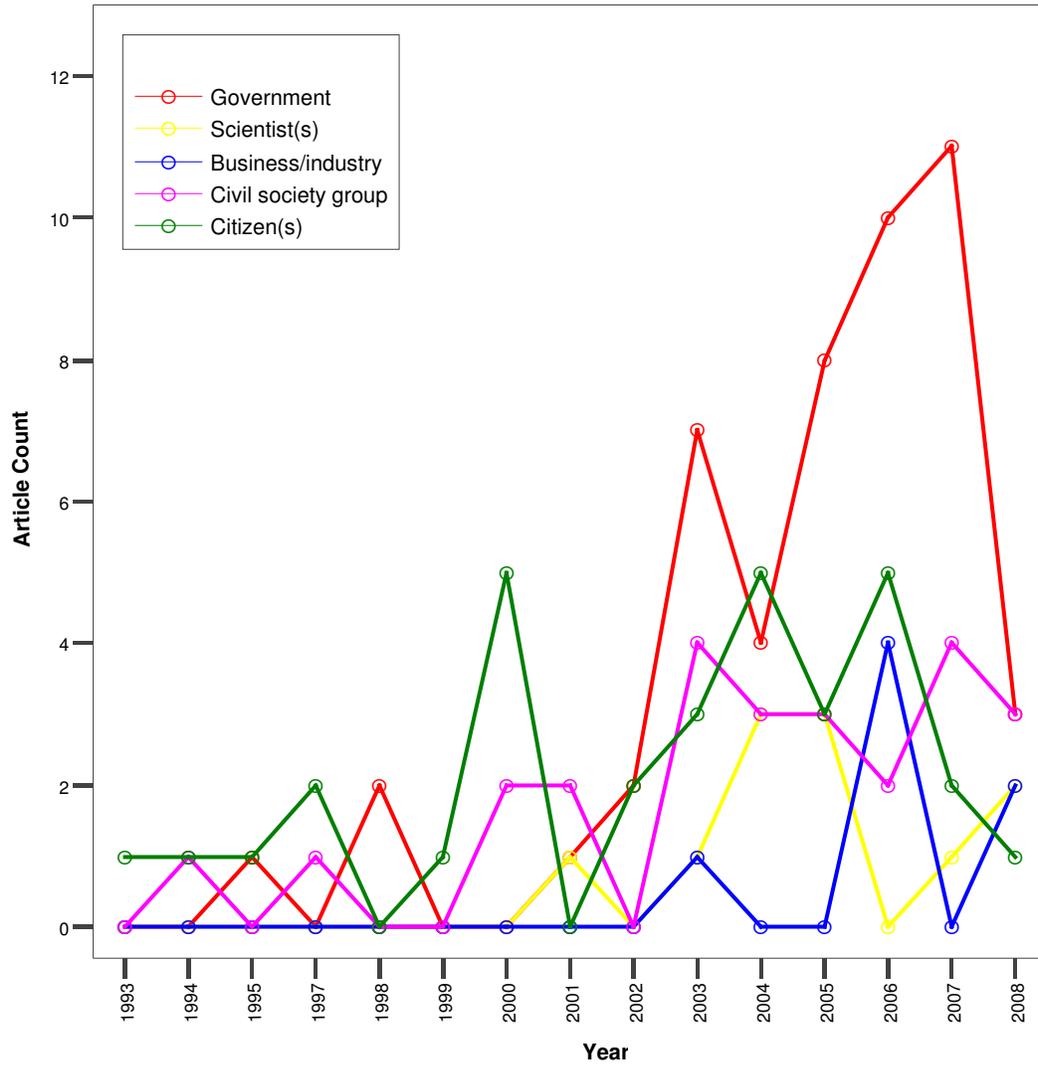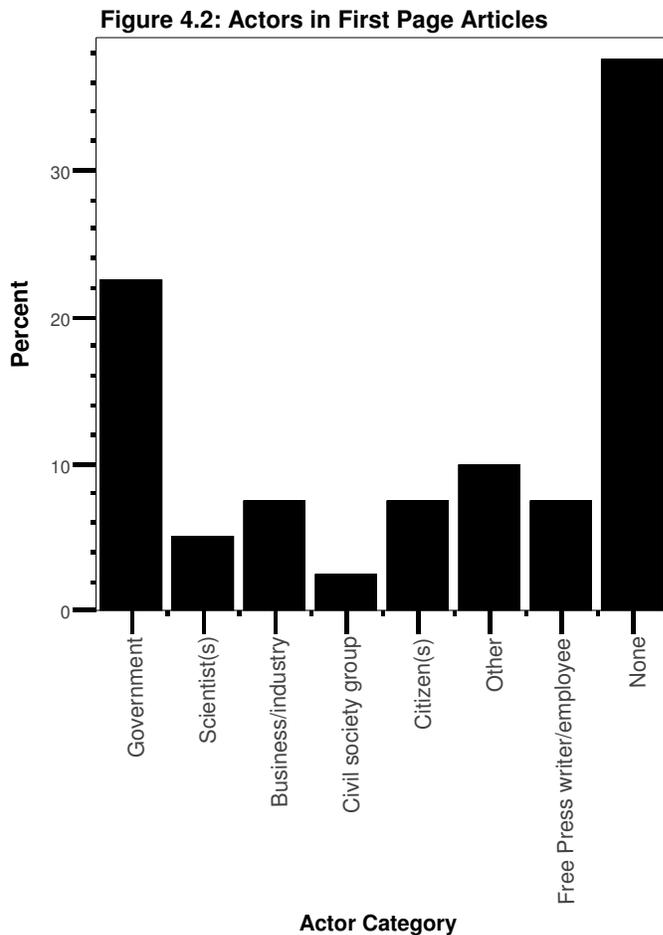
Figure 4.3 also shows that the number of articles in which government and business were actors *decreased* over the pages of the newspaper. The frequency of scientists as actors fluctuated throughout the pages, but they had a better chance of defining articles earlier than civil society sources, and the number of pieces with citizens as actors rose dramatically between pages 11 and 16.

Another way to describe this finding numerically is to calculate a sort of median of the page number for each actor on which 50% of the articles are higher and 50% are lower. For government, the median was on page 4, for scientists on page 4, for civil society groups on page 10 and for citizens on page 13. Therefore, the numerous findings in this section show that civil society, as an actor or defining source, was more likely to find this role later in the newspaper rather than earlier. These findings, in turn, suggest lower prominence for civil society as an actor.

Finally, some observations can be made about the topics for which different actor types had their perspectives heard. Perhaps most notably, there were several topics that could have gone almost unmentioned in the newspaper were it not for the efforts of civil society. The topic of "other water contaminants"[109] saw only four articles within the sample (1.7% of all articles); two of these articles had a civil society group as an actor, while one of them had a citizen as an actor. The last had no actor. Civil society also instigated 75% (3 of 4) of the articles on wetlands.

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[109] The topic "other water contaminants" was discussed to some degree in Chapter 2. Essentially, it encompasses any water contaminants that are not nutrients, *E. coli*, hog waste or human sewage. Heavy metals, pharmaceuticals, hormones and radiation are examples of some "other water contaminants."

Figure 4.3: Actors Throughout Page Numbers

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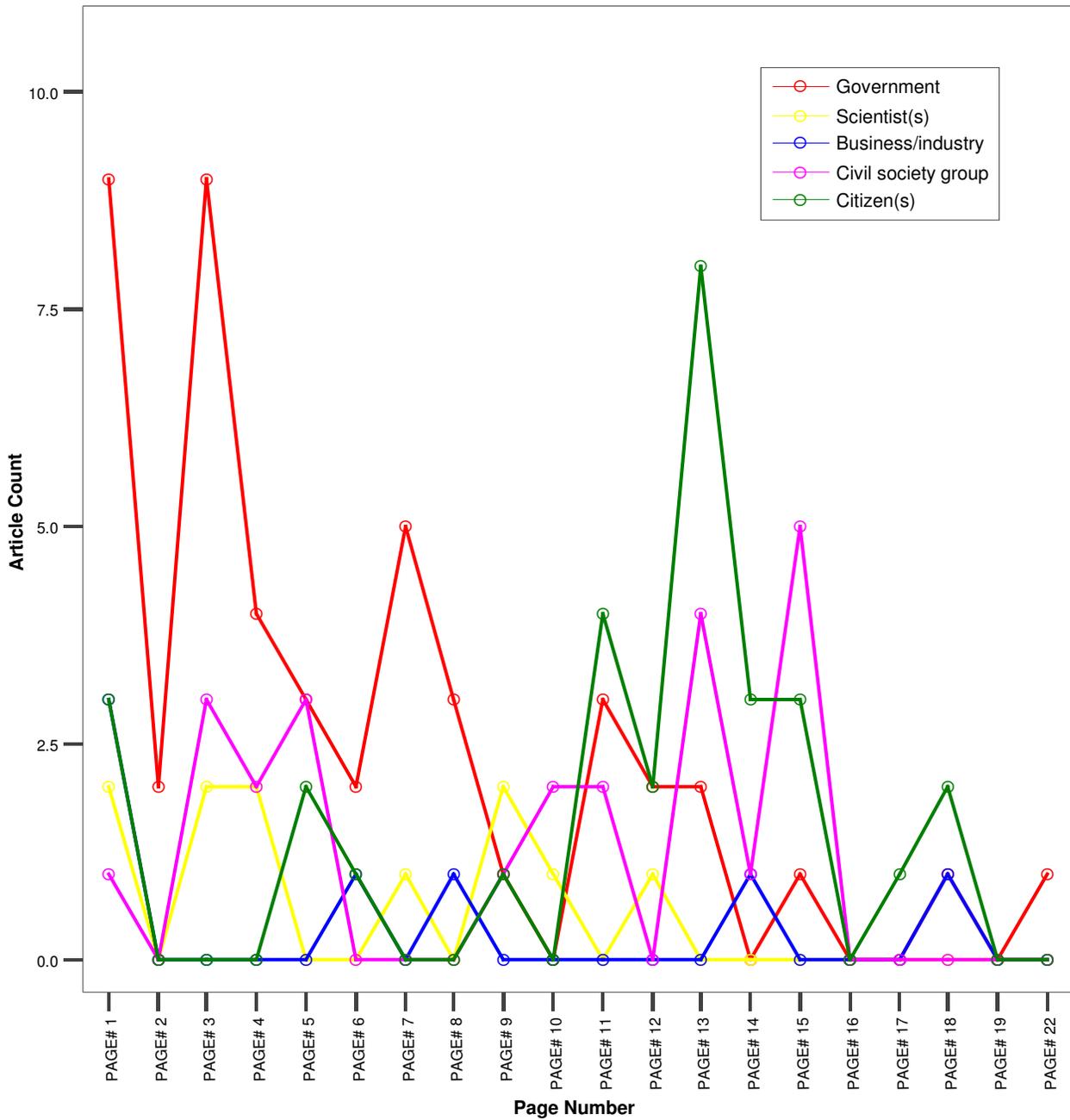
[110] The topic "other water contaminants" was discussed to some degree in Chapter 2. Essentially, it encompasses any water contaminants that are not nutrients, *E. coli*, hog waste or human sewage. Heavy metals, pharmaceuticals, hormones and radiation are examples of some "other water contaminants."

Figure 4.4: Actors in Devils Lake Articles
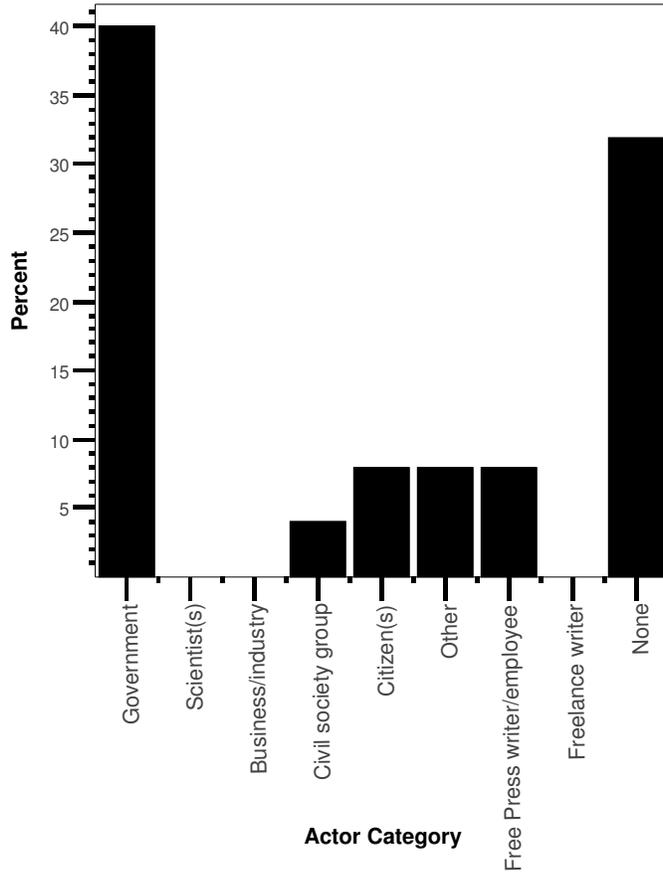
There were no other clear patterns throughout the data regarding which actors defined the news. Rather, each news topic seemed to have its own unique findings, perhaps due to factors such as how active the various levels of government were on regulating pollutants of concern, how contentious an issue was, how many non-governmental organizations existed around an issue, what announcements scientists made and how businesses and industry were affected by an issue.

For instance, government dominated coverage of the Devils Lake diversion, being the actor in 40% of the articles with actors (see Figure 4.4). Perhaps this finding is not surprising, as the cross-boundary conflict is highly political, involving two federal governments, the province of Manitoba, several states and many affected municipalities and counties. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that a civil society group was the actor in only 1 of the 25 articles with actors, or 4% of articles even though numerous civil society groups have been vocal on the topic, including Friends of the Earth Canada, Save the Sheyenne River and The Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy.

Another topic that saw government dominate as the actor was that of "human sewage and wastewater." Altogether, the three levels of government represented 35.5% of actors for this topic (figure not shown). Citizens were the next most common actors at 12.9%, followed by scientists at 6.5% (excluding the category "none" and "Free Press writer," which are not relevant in the current discussion). Civil society groups never defined this issue in the sample.

Figure 4.5: Actors in Hog-Related Articles
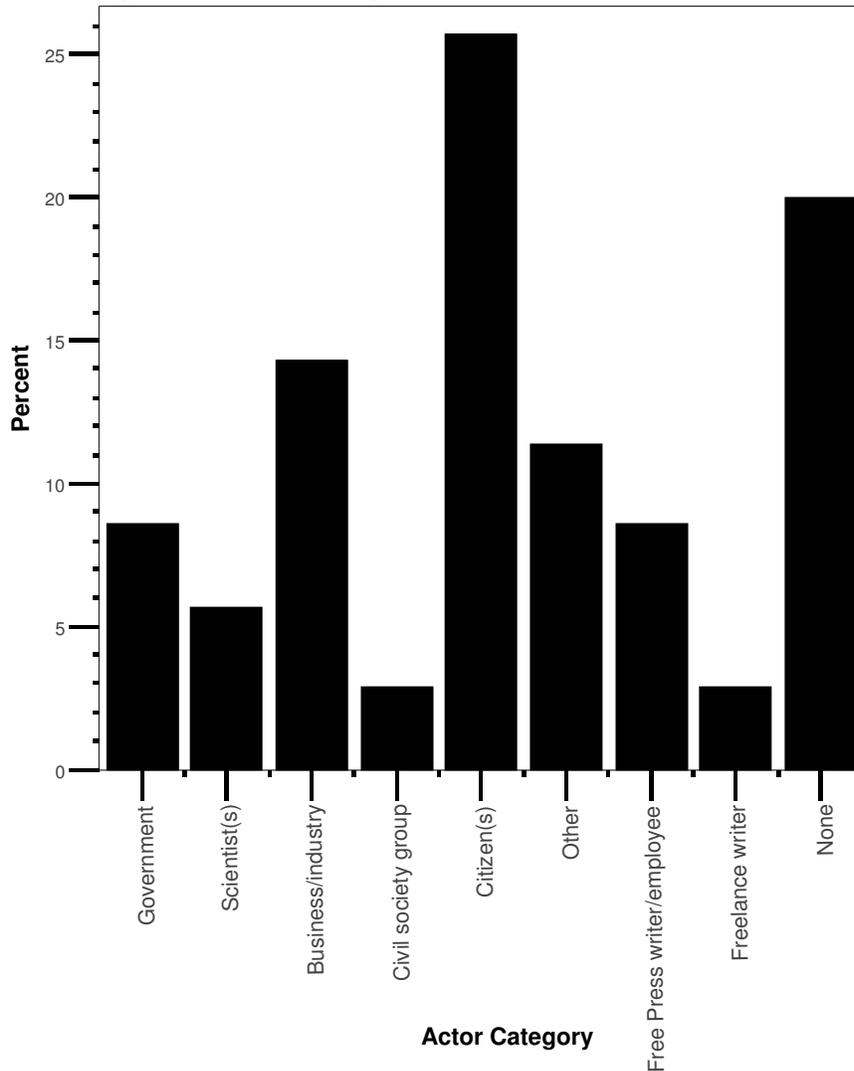
Of the 35 articles related to the hog industry that had actors, only 2.6% had a civil society group as an actor, while 25.7% had citizens as actors, the largest actor category for the topic (see Figure 4.5). Other than citizens, the next most frequent actor on the topic was business/industry groups, at 14.3% of actors (excluding the category "no actor"). Since the size of the hog industry is controversial in the province, and numerous civil society organizations are critical of its practices (e.g. Burns 2009; Hog Watch Manitoba 2009; Tipples 2009), it is notable that civil society groups were so rarely actors while business/industry groups were more commonly actors. The role of the Manitoba Pork Council as an actor representing industry via letters to the editor is discussed in detail in the following section.

4.2.3: H3 findings
H3) That civil society will try to find a voice via newspaper pieces that are not "hard news", such as letters to the editor, focus pieces and Op-Eds;

Findings discussed above have already mentioned some findings that support H3, for example that citizens were by far more likely to find an actor role in letters to the editor than in "hard news". This section will further elaborate on how the data support this hypothesis.

First, the researcher considered in what types of article different types of actors were able to define the issues. The findings strongly support H3. Almost 90% of pieces in which government was the defining source were "hard news"; other article types in which government was the actor were Op-Eds by freelance writers (4.1%) and letters to the editor (6.1%) (see Table 4.14). Business/industry groups and scientists, the other elite source categories considered, were also most likely to find actor roles in "hard news"; business/industry achieved an "actor" role in 71.4% of the articles in which it was an actor, and scientists in 81.8% of articles in which they were an actor. Government, business and scientists were most successful in defining "hard news" stories. In comparison, 60% of pieces in which civil society groups were actors were "hard news." Civil society had higher penetration as defining sources than did elite sources in article types that were not "hard news" – 40% of the pieces in which civil society was an actor were in Op-Eds and letters to the editor. Citizens had even greater reliance on non-"hard news" to achieve defining roles; 84.4% of pieces in which citizens were defining sources were in the letters to the editor section, while only 15.6% were in "hard news". These findings suggest that government, business/industry groups and scientists have been cast in actor roles in "hard news", whereas civil society groups have relied more on Op-Eds or letters to the editor. The interview section of this thesis will elaborate on civil society's views about media access, and the discussion section of this paper will discuss the benefits and drawback of expressing one's views in Op-Eds and letters to the editor.

Table 4.14: Actor Penetration into Different Types of Articles

		Column by employee	Op-Ed	Editorial	'Hard' news	Letter to editor	Other	Total
Actor	Government	.0%	4.1%	.0%	89.8%	6.1%	.0%	100.0%
	Scientist(s)	.0%	9.1%	.0%	81.8%	9.1%	.0%	100.0%
	Business or industry	.0%	.0%	.0%	71.4%	28.6%	.0%	100.0%
	Civil society	.0%	20.0%	.0%	60.0%	20.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Citizen(s)	.0%	.0%	.0%	15.6%	84.4%	.0%	100.0%
	Other	.0%	7.1%	.0%	78.6%	7.1%	7.1%	100.0%
	Freelance	.0%	100.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	None	3.8%	.0%	3.8%	79.2%	.0%	13.2%	100.0%

Moreover, the data revealed the lower placement prominence of letters to the editor and Op-Eds compared to "hard news"; this finding is not surprising, but still must be highlighted. Almost 70% of "hard news" occurred within the first five pages of the newspaper (of either sections A or B). The earliest placement of letters to the editor in the sample was on page 5 (of either sections A or B), while the bulk of the letters to the editor (73.8%) occurred between pages 11 and 15. This is not an unusual newspaper design, but the data do show that citizens were not nearly as likely to define the news in the earlier, more prominent pages of the newspaper.

Op-Eds also appeared considerably later in the newspaper than did "hard news"; only 25% occurred on or before page 10,[111] while 50.1% occurred on pages 13, 14 or 15. Many civil society groups consider Op-Eds and focus pieces to be desirable and valuable means by which to voice their views. Certainly, both letters to the editor and Op-Eds are valuable pieces in the newspaper; however, they were placed less prominently.

A brief qualitative analysis of letters to the editor was also carried out to detect patterns in letters to the editor. It is common for letters to the editor to respond to articles that were published, perhaps responding to views presented by sources in the original article, commenting on how journalists presented information or providing an alternative perspective on a topic. Letters often also comment on governmental announcements and policies presented in the news. These comments are valuable to civil society involvement in governance.

One of the most striking findings was that letter writers were calling for a moratorium on hog barns six years before the provincial government imposed one. In 2000, Ridgen wrote: "The government should begin by imposing an immediate freeze on further expansion of the industry. It should ask a politically independent Clean Environment Commission to determine the long-term sustainable level of pork production in the province and define the appropriate farming practices given Manitoba's geography and climate" (b5). In November of 2006, the Manitoba government did almost exactly that, imposing a temporary moratorium on new hog barns until a review by the Clean Environment Commission was carried out. Prior to 2006, several other letter

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[111] Also in comparison, 54.5% of columns written by *Free Press* employees occurred on or before page 10, indicating that columns by *Free Press* writers receive higher prominence than those written by freelance writers. Perhaps this finding is not surprising or even inappropriate – the *Free Press* employs many skilled columnists, and it is natural that the publication wants to provide their work with higher prominence.

writers made similar recommendations that hog barn expansions cease (Fell 2000; Harrison 2003).[112]

In a similar "prediction" of provincial policy, in March of 2003, a letter from non-governmental organization, the Manitoba Association of Cottage Owners, called for the hiring of more inspectors for leaking septic fields (Neal 2003). In November of 2007, the provincial government publicly recognized the need for more inspectors in a *Winnipeg Free Press* article (Welch 2007), though at the time it did not have sufficient funding to hire all of the inspectors required to enforce septic field legislation.

A second observation made in the qualitative analysis was the regularity with which letter writers made "calls to action" to readers, encouraging them to take action on threats to water quality through such means as contacting their government, protesting, using their votes for change and altering their own behaviours to protect the lake. Notable examples included the following:

> What is needed is a massive outpouring of public indignation at what is being allowed to take place in our province. (Zarow 2000, A11).

> We must all stop reaching for that last greedy dollar for our personal gain and start some long-range planning for the good of this wonderful natural resource and future generations. (Turner 1999, A11)

> So, people of urban Manitoba, it is up to you. Your voices must now be heard. The government will have to pay attention and heed your cries, for they count their voting majority very carefully. Maybe by working together with rural people, Lake Winnipeg can be saved. … We must insist our governments treat the causes, not just the symptoms. (Fefchak 2003, A11)

> Call your MP, call your MLA., call your mayor or reeve and tell them you want it fixed...now. (Keep 2004, A13).

> …in the end, whatever bylaws they introduce, it is up to us, the citizens of this great

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[112] In addition, non-governmental organization Winnipeg Water Watch recommended a moratorium in a 2000 news article when they were asked to comment on government policy put forward by the then newly elected provincial NDP government. At the time, the NDP government was increasing farm inspections, soil testing, water monitoring, and review of land use policies, but apparently not restricting hog barn expansion. The comment from Winnipeg Water Watch was at the end of the article (i.e. last source position), in an article with five sources in total (Nairne 2000). Non-governmental organization, Hog Watch, also pushed for a moratorium in 2000 (Robertson 2000), with numerous follow-up articles in the *Free Press* (e.g. Sanders 2001).

province, to do what is right for the environment. Let's wake up before it is too late! (Grayston, LeRougetel & Tipples 2006, A14).

Citizen activist, Lindy Clubb, wrote two letters (Clubb 2004; Clubb 2006) describing what she would be doing to minimize her personal impact on the environment. In one, she wrote:

It's raining outside.

I won't be turning on the taps, flushing the toilet, or washing a load of laundry in the home I've owned for over 20 years until it ends.

Why?

The sewage runs into combined pipes, mixes with the storm water that sluices off our concrete roads and the mats of sod on our lawns and overwhelms the treatment plants…

Until the sewer pipes here are uncombined, until we have treatment plants that will clean wastewater before it hits the river and ends up in the lakes we all love (Lake Winnipeg more than any other body of water), I'll turn off the taps…Perhaps more people in our community will do the same. (2004, A15)

In essence, Clubb was modeling behaviours that she hoped other citizens would emulate. These calls for action are important, for they urge citizens to participate in democracy. Traditional "impartial" news is not meant to take such a stance. "Hard news" rarely calls on readers to take specific action; it is meant to be ingested passively though, certainly, readers may react. Through calls for actions in letters to the editor, letter writers contribute to good governance by suggesting what people can do to be involved.

Third, letter writers presented perspectives on water quality topics that were valuable to the debate and were often not present in "hard news". One letter writer recounted an incident his father told him about, in which the father noticed algae and dead fish in the Winnipeg River near a pulp and paper mill, made a verbal report, "but in view of the importance of the Pine Falls industry to the workers,…was directed not to make a written report of it. Thus an early attempt to call attention to the dangers of pollution went unheeded" (Stevens 2002, A11). Another letter from a group of fishers brought insight into their own experiences with changes in the lake (Olson, Bjarnason, Campbell & Goodman 2004). Other anecdotal, illustrative and, for good governance, potentially valuable stories were told in letters to the editor (e.g. Spakowski 2002; Genaille 2005; Stefanson 2007). Taylor (2005) brought up a water quality concern that had not yet been discussed in the newspaper; he asked if disposal of nuclear waste in the Canadian

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shield, east of Lake Winnipeg, could result in radioactive pollution in Lake Winnipeg.[113] Rolls (2005) suggested the use of fountains to increase the amount of oxygen in the water in order to counter oxygen loss from algae decomposition. Whether or not radioactive pollution is an actual likelihood, or fountains are a workable idea, it is important that these citizens were able to express their concerns and ideas to a large audience through their letters. Section 4.2.1 already noted fairly low inclusion of citizen perspectives in "hard news". It is in letters to the editor that citizens can more fully voice their views and be thoughtful actors, rather than passively responding to journalists' questions.

A good example of a citizen having his idea turned into a "hard news" piece and, therefore, to some degree fulfilling an expectation of public journalism that civil society contribute meaningfully to the news agenda, was a story written about citizen Halli Jonasson's assertion that a causeway built on Lake Winnipeg in 1971 could be contributing to algal blooms (Rollason 2007c). Having trapped and fished on the Lake for decades, Jonasson suggested that the causeway hinders water flow between the Lake's north and south basins. Scientists have agreed that there is merit to this theory and the provincial Liberal party held a public forum on the issue. Before 2007, it had not been discussed to a great extent in any public forum, such as a newspaper or a public meeting. This instance shows the value of civil society: while government was focused on reducing nutrient flows *into* Lake Winnipeg, this citizen saw the problem from another perspective – how nutrients were circulating in the lake once they had entered. Both nutrient inflows and water circulation are likely having effects on the lake's health. Therefore, it is valuable to have as many perspectives as possible in public debate. Jonasson started just such a debate.

Finally, the main pro-hog industry group, the Manitoba Pork Council, had a disproportionate number of letters to the editor. Out of 89 letters to the editor, the Manitoba Pork Council had written five, or 5.6% (Kynoch 2006a; Kynoch 2006b; Kynoch 2007; Kynoch 2008; Muir 2003). No other person, organization or government official had as many letters. No civil society organization had more than one letter to the editor published. In total, nine letters in the

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[113] Manitoba has a law against such nuclear waste disposal, but Kenora, in Ontario, was not restricted by such a law.

article population (10.1%) were from civil society organizations,[114] 7.9% were from government officials, 4.5% were from scientists and 70.8% were from citizens.[115]

Moreover, the messages and information communicated by Manitoba Pork were repeated throughout the letters. Three of the five letters stated that agriculture contributes only 12% of nutrients to Lake Winnipeg,[116] three letters stated that hogs only contribute 1-1.5% of phosphorus,[117] three stressed that the Manitoba Pork Council invests in research (making the Council appear to be a good corporate citizen), three stressed industry "commitment" to the environment, three stressed emphatically that the industry is heavily regulated and two mentioned the hog industry's dedication to "future generations." No other such repetition was found throughout the letter population.[118] In short, the *Winnipeg Free Press* published letters by the Manitoba Pork Council more often than any other actor and these were the only letters that saw such repetition of information.

4.3 Summary

The data discussed in this chapter showed that civil society organizations and citizens were used less prominently as sources and "actors" than "traditional" sources in *Winnipeg Free Press* coverage about Lake Winnipeg nutrient loading from 1991 to 2008. Over all, the three hypotheses were supported, results that strengthen arguments made by other academics that

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[114] The non-governmental organizations that had members write letters to the editor were: Lake Winnipeg Watch, the Sturgeon Creek Association, Manitoba Association of Cottage Owners, Save our Seine River Environment Inc., Climate Change Connection, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (Manitoba Chapter), Foundations in the Lake Winnipeg Watershed Initiative and the IISD.

[115] These numbers may vary slightly from those reported elsewhere in this thesis, as they were calculated based on a separate study of all letters to the editor in the article population, rather than the article sample.

[116] This reported statistic is on the low end of agriculture's estimated contribution. The Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board (2006) estimates that agriculture contributes 15% to Lake Winnipeg, this calculation based on loading throughout the watershed states and provinces. The Board also notes that agriculture is responsible for approximately 32% of phosphorus loading from *within Manitoba*. This distinction is left out of letters to the editor and could be perceived as misleading, or at least the deliberate selection of the most positive statistic available.

[117] This estimate is not agreed upon by all scientists and is not considered scientific *fact* by many stakeholders. However, the Manitoba Pork Council mounted an advertising campaign publicizing this statistic, which included a two-page advertisement in the *Winnipeg Free Press.*

[118] This repetition may be a concern due to how people learn. Part of governance is based on citizens having the information with which to make decisions. It has been proven in studies that information is more likely to be retained if a person sees it repeatedly (Albertson & Lawrence 2009). Therefore, the information emphasized by the Manitoba Pork Council in these letters may be more likely to be remembered by readers than information presented only once, as is the case with most information presented by letter writers. It stands to reason, then, that some citizens could be swayed in favour of the hog industry's viewpoint, given the disproportionate number of times the Council's view is presented.

different types of sources often receive differential treatment, and that "elite" sources dominate coverage. Through such measurements as source placement, word counts and manner of attribution, the data showed that civil society was represented less prominently than were "elite" sources. Government, particularly at the provincial level, was found to be the most dominant "elite" source. The content analysis also indicated that "elite" actors were the most successful at defining news stories in the hard news sections. Again, government was the most dominant as a defining source. Scientists, business and industry were also all able to define 'hard' news more than was civil society. "Elite" sources were also more able to define news in the earlier pages of the paper. In contrast, as "actors," civil society sources were more likely to be found in the letters to the editor section and, if they were fortunate, the Op-Ed pages. There were several particularly notable findings, including that civil society was more prominent as an actor in the 1990s than in the 2000s, and that certain topics would have received little or no coverage without the input of civil society. This chapter's findings provide the premise for the discussion in Chapter 6 about how usage of civil society sources by the news media could affect good governance and participatory democracy.

Chapter 5: Interview findings

5.1 Methodology

The third method of data inquiry was that of semi-structured interviews with members of civil society groups that were involved to varying degrees in Lake Winnipeg water quality work. The criteria for selecting civil society interviewees were as follows:

1) They had to work with a civil society organization that carried out some work related to nutrient loading in the Lake Winnipeg watershed.

2) The organization had to include raising public awareness or public education as one of its goals, or have such a goal be apparent (e.g. through the writing of Op-Ed pieces, thereby reaching out to the public), even if public awareness/education was not explicitly included in the organization's stated goals.

3) The organization did not have to have been used as a story source or otherwise have its views published in the *Winnipeg Free Press* in order to be considered for inclusion, as it is possible that non-inclusion in Free Press articles could reveal valuable information (e.g. did organizations seek to be included in the news, but were not? Did they not seek out news coverage because they did not believe it to be an effective vehicle for education?)

A list of potential interviewees was generated using various sources of information including the Manitoba Water Directory (2005), the Manitoba Eco-Network Membership list (n.d.) and a survey of *Winnipeg Free Press* articles.

Once the initial list of potential interviewees was created, the researcher collected further information on the different groups and read about each group's involvement in water quality work. Most of this research was done via the internet, through reading on the organizations' web sites, and through searches in the *Winnipeg Free Press* database. The researcher then made a short-list of potential interviewees, using the following considerations as a selection guide:

1) An attempt was made to include both small organizations and larger ones.

2) An attempt was made to include both advocacy and non-advocacy organizations, as well as organizations with charitable status and those without.

3) An attempt was made to include organizations quoted a number of times in the *Winnipeg Free Press* and those that were not included much, or at all.

4) Attention was paid to whether the organizations' members or employees wrote letters to the editor or Op-Ed pieces. The researcher sought to include such groups on the short-list, because experiences with and access to the letters to the editor page and the Op-Ed page were of interest to this study.

The researcher then contacted the member of the organization who appeared to be the most likely to deal with the news media. When an organization had a dedicated media person, this person was generally contacted. Other times, the executive directors or people of similar rank were contacted, because these people were most often cited in newspaper articles. Most of the interviewees were first contacted via e-mails (75%) that included an information letter (see Appendix V) that described the research, but other interviewees were first contacted by telephone (20%) or in-person (5%). Interviewees were asked to sign a consent form and were invited to ask any questions they wished prior to or during the interview.

A semi-structured interview format was adopted. The researcher submitted a schedule of interview questions to the University of Waterloo ethics department for approval and these questions guided the interactions. An interview style that Wilson (1996) terms "naturalistic" was adopted – one which "takes the form of a conversational type of interaction between investigator and respondent" (95). Therefore, the questions were pursued in logical order depending on when topics arose during the interview; interviewees were asked all questions, but the order of questions varied between the interviews. At times, wording of the questions was altered. In addition, the researcher asked follow-up and probing questions when necessary. The researcher attempted to follow the naturalistic approach of holding interviews in everyday settings, as well – ones in which the respondents would feel comfortable. These were either the respondent's office, a board room they offered or a restaurant of their choosing. Location of interviewees was not controlled for telephone interviews. In total, twenty individuals were interviewed, representing nine registered charities and seven non-charities (see Table 5.1). In addition, one interviewee was a prolific letter writer who is not with a specific organization (Fefchack 2009). None of the interviewees was involved specifically in Lake Winnipeg work for the entire span of time covered in the content analysis (1991-2008). However,

Table 5.1 Registered Charities and Non-Charities Consulted

Registered charities consulted

Centre for Indigenous Environment Resources (Phare 2009)

Ducks Unlimited Canada (Bruce 2009; Reimer 2009)

Foundations in the Lake Winnipeg Watershed Initiative (Burns 2009)

International Institute for Sustainable Development (Pelletier 2009; Venema 2009)

Manitoba Eco-Network (Lindsey 2009)

Manitoba Water Caucus (Brandon 2009; Kopelow 2009)

Mixedwood Forest Society (Clubb 2009; Dolecki 2009)

Organization represented by Anonymous 3

Organization represented by Anonymous 2

Non-charities consulted [a]

Citizens for the Responsible Application of Phosphorus (Baron 2009; Dolecki 2009; Pryzner 2009)

Concerned Daly Raterpayers (Dolecki 2009; Pryzner 2009)

Hog Watch Manitoba (Burns 2009)

International Erosion Control Association (North Chapter) (Clubb 2009)

Manitoba Wildlands (G. Whelan-Enns 2009; K. Whelan-Enns 2009)

Save Our Lake (Tipples 2009)

Organization represented by Anonymous 1

Fefchak 2009 (letter to editor writer not affiliated with a specific group)

[a.] These groups are still considered non-profit organizations. They simply do not have charitable statuses.

several groups were likely carrying out work in the 1990s that did not make a direct link to Lake Winnipeg health but was related, nonetheless; these groups are Ducks Unlimited Canada, the IISD, the Manitoba Eco-Network, and Manitoba Wildlands. Nine of the groups began their involvement in the late 1990s and early 2000s, forming in response to water quality concerns; these nine are the Manitoba Water Caucus (Brandon 2009; Kopelow 2009), Citizens for the Responsible Application of Phosphorus (Baron 2009; Dolecki 2009; Pryzner 2009), Concerned Daly Ratepayers (Dolecki 2009; Pryzner 2009), Hog Watch Manitoba (Burns 2009), Save Our Lake (Tipples 2009), Foundations in the Lake Winnipeg Watershed Initiative (Burns 2009), the organization represented by Anonymous 1 (2009), the organization represented by Anonymous 2 (2009) and the organization represented by Anonymous 3 (2009).

Perhaps the greatest limitation to this research was that a number of the questions were "retrospective," asking respondents to reflect on past events and media coverage (109). Accuracy of memory was, therefore, a potential concern. At times, the researcher received similar information on events from more than one interviewee, thereby validating research. Fact checking was also carried out through internet and database research. Finally, the researcher contacted the interviewees when she had concerns about accuracy. Some interviewees also requested to review information attributed to them, and the researcher complied with such requests. Another potential limitation was the willingness of participants to participate in the research. Fortunately, response rates of organizations contacted were quite high, as 83% of those contacted agreed to be interviewed.[119]

The interviews were tape-recorded with consent. All (100%) of the interviewees agreed to have the interview tape-recorded. The researcher hired two competent transcribers to transcribe approximately 70% of the interviews, and transcribed the other 30% herself.

The transcripts were read through numerous times and coded for "patterns, classifications, themes and categories," a common technique to organize qualitative data. The process is described in Berger (2000). The coding was done by creating a list of topics during the first reading of the transcript, refining this list on the second reading, and then assigning abbreviations to each topic on the list. For instance, the topic "whose responsibility is it to ensure the public is adequately informed?" (discussed in the next section) was abbreviated to "RESP". The pages of the transcripts were then manually coded using the abbreviations; the abbreviations were written in the margins of the page whenever a topic was found in the text. After coding was complete, the material was re-assembled according to topics/abbreviations. This approach helped the reader to organize the data into groups that were easier to consider, analyze and synthesize. The approach used to analyze the data was primarily inductive in that general conclusions were drawn using a limited set of observations.

5.2 Whose responsibility is it to ensure the public is informed?

One unanticipated question that came up in the interviews was, essentially, *whose responsibility is it to get Lake Winnipeg topics into the news, and to ensure the public is*

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[119] Of the four potential interview respondents who were contacted but not interviewed, two agreed to be interviewed but mutually workable times and places for the interviews were not found, and two did not respond to repeated attempts to make contact.

adequately educated through whichever means (news media, public forums, brochures etc.) in order to make responsible decisions? This question is an appropriate topic on which to start discussion of the interviews, as it illustrates the complexity of governance and participatory democracy. The interviewees implied at least six potential answers to this question (with most of their responses encompassing more than one of the possibilities):

1. The news media are responsible for seeking out a wide range of perspectives and voices on the topic of Lake Winnipeg water quality.

2. Civil society organizations are responsible for reaching out to the news media to get their perspective heard.

3. The three levels of government are responsible for making sure the public has adequate information to make decisions. The media provide a valuable vehicle they can use.

4. The public is responsible for educating itself through news media, public forums and further reading on topics. If the news media do not include the information the public feels it needs, the public should communicate its concerns to the media.

5. Scientists are responsible for finding means to disseminate important information to government and the public so that responsible decisions can be made.

6. Various combinations of the parties listed above share this responsibility.

This thesis endeavoured to explore the interplay between the news media and civil society, to determine how voices from civil society enter the news media. The interview participants provided nuanced, and by no means consensual perspectives, on the topic of responsibility. Many of the participants felt that more than one party had a responsibility to bring important issues and information to light. Most felt there was a mixture of responsibilities, though each usually placed more emphasis on one option.

Numerous[120] interview participants felt that a significant amount of responsibility lies on the news media to solicit perspectives that give the public adequate information for decision-making (Clubb 2009; Dolecki 2009; Venema 2009; Whelan-Enns 2009).

Venema (2009) asks "Is it [a newspaper] a public good or a business? What should the *Winnipeg Free Press* be doing in its coverage?" He suggests that the news media are responsible

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[120] In this thesis, I generally do not explicitly state the number of interview participants that expressed a certain view. Rather, that number is to be inferred by the reader from the in-text citations that follow the statement.

for allocating resources to adequately cover important issues such as the environment and, more specifically, in-depth reporting on Lake Winnipeg.

Whelan-Enns (2009) also feels more media energy should go into in-depth coverage of Lake Winnipeg water issues; she, and other interview participants, suggest the quality and depth of news coverage has decreased in recent decades (Dolecki 2009; Fefchak 2009). Says Whelan-Enns: "Newspapers ideally, and used to, contribute to civil society, to the education of civilians, to the motivation to speak up, to participate, to have an opinion, to go to a meeting, to run for office, to set policy, to participate in a committee or to demonstrate."

Dolecki (2009) holds a similar view. In his eyes, the media today have abandoned their role of serving the public good, and are "part of the instrumentality of control over populations and control over ideas." Ideally, he would like to see news media that are more attuned to helping improve their communities. "Historically, newspapers have functioned as a means of inter-community communication and debate, discussion, and a place where ideas are shared… They've functioned as an organizing tool for people. Those functions are incompatible with the objectives of the corporatist world."

Bruce (2009) had mixed opinions about which groups are responsible to ensure adequate information for good governance.

> I don't disagree that there is inadequate consultation with non-governmental organizations but if I was a journalist…I would say, "You're blaming the media for poor governance because we're not doing a good enough job of consulting with all these non-governmental organizations." First off, I don't think that's the media's job. Good governance is not the media's job…If you want good governance, the media isn't even involved. It should be the public and the government. The media can be the linkage but they're not the ones that have to do it. It's not their responsibility.

Bruce reasons that the media may be a conduit for information, but that other parties, including citizens, civil society groups and the government, play or should play perhaps a greater role in determining which information for decision-making becomes included in the media. Bruce suggested that civil society organizations have some responsibility to bring important information to public knowledge.

> I'll suggest that we have a responsibility to position ourselves as available and have some authority on certain issues that we feel we need to provide input to. My point is, we should not be sitting here waiting for the media to come to us for opinion. We need to be more proactive. If we want to get our stories out it's up to us. I would suggest that it's up

to Ducks Unlimited and other organizations to get their word out and develop a strategy and key messages.

Anonymous 3 (2009) has a similar perspective. While he places the greatest responsibility on the news media to ensure they have appropriate information, he reflects that his own civil society group could increase its efforts to aid the media, saying "Maybe we can accept some responsibility for not doing as much as we could to help them get the real message out." That said, he is wary of exerting too much pressure on the media to alter their pieces, because he feels they may be sensitive about being told how to do their jobs.

In addition, he is concerned that the media at times partake in "political games," such as the deliberate encouragement of conflict between opposing parties, in their coverage, sometimes to the detriment of the issue they are covering. He would like to see "responsible journalism" on Lake Winnipeg, where no such games are played. If the media were to approach their role in such a way, he feels that his group could productively provide guidance to the media. Ideally, he would like civil society and other stakeholders to collaborate with the media to create better understanding and action on the issue.

> I'm prepared to provide them with the best information I have…we're going to try and improve our relationship with the media, and we're going to hope that they're going to step up and say 'well, maybe we can speed the process up by getting the right message out.' And government will follow up with their mandated responsibility, and then when they pass legislation, compliance will happen very quickly with that legislation because people will be aware.

Numerous other interviewees also commented that civil society organizations have a responsibility to be more proactive (Anonymous 1 2009; Anonymous 2 2009; Clubb 2009; Lindsey 2009; Phare 2009). Several reasons were also given why civil society organizations have difficulty being proactive. These reasons, which include limited resources, not having dedicated media personnel and the risk of losing their charity status for being too "advocacy-oriented," are discussed in section 5.8.3.

Bruce (2009) also suggested that some of the responsibility lies with scientists to disseminate findings, and he suggests that civil society can play a role in this process. Ducks Unlimited Canada has communications professionals to help convey this information to wider audience. Therefore, a relationship between scientists and public relations/communications people at Ducks Unlimited Canada aids in media and public outreach. Clubb (2009) also feels

the onus is partially on scientists to disseminate results, and she worries that too many important results stay within scientific conferences, papers and discussions, rather than reaching the broader public.

A number of interview participants raised concerns about information control by the elected government, particularly at the provincial level, and whether or not they provided adequate information to the media and to citizens who requested information through the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (Clubb 2009; Dolecki 2009; Pryzner 2009). For instance, Pryzner (2009) has had difficulty accessing information from the government. In 2007, she made national news when she sent a large number of freedom of information requests to the Manitoba government in order to prepare herself for a Clean Environment Commission hearing, and was told that it would take 13.5 years for the information to be provided (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 2007; Rabson 2007 "13 years"). She worries about the difficulties the media may also have in getting full information to make decisions.[121] No definitive answer can be given for the question of whose responsibility it is to ensure the public has adequate information. However, interview findings confirm that the news media play a significant role in information provision.

5.3 The importance of the news media to civil society organizations' efforts

In order to properly analyze media coverage of Lake Winnipeg nutrient loading, and reveal how organizations are included in coverage, it was necessary to find out if the news media are seen as key outreach vehicles for organizations' outreach plans, or simply one of many methods of outreach.

Responses for this question were mixed. Several interview respondents said the media were "very important" to their plans (Anonymous 1 2009; Anonymous 3 2009; Burns 2009;[122] Tipples 2009). The majority of respondents said the news media were moderately important to their organizations' goals (Anonymous 2 2009; Brandon 2009; Bruce 2009; Clubb 2009; Kopelow 2009; Pelletier 2009; Phare 2009; Reimer 2009; Venema 2009; G. Whelan-Enns

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[121] Pryzner is correct in suggesting that journalists have difficult accessing information through the Freedom of Information Act. Journalist Rohmahn (1998) has waited up to five years to access documents. The process can be so difficult that he recommends "cajoling civil servants and politicians" whenever possible, in order to bypass an application through the Act (279).

[122] Burns said that the news media were important to the goals of one of her organizations, Hog Watch, but less important to the goals of Foundations in the Lake Winnipeg Watershed Initiative.

2009).[123] Burns (2009) said the media were not very important for the goals of one of the organizations with which she works, Foundations in the Lake Winnipeg Watershed Initiative, part of Community Foundations of Canada, simply because the target audience of the Initiative is generally the board of directors Community Foundations of Canada. "To use the news media to get to boards of directors of foundations is not focused enough." However, she says that for another organization with which she volunteers, Hog Watch, the media are central.

Interviewees reported that one exceptional benefit of news media coverage was that coverage allows the organization to reach huge numbers of people, in comparison to most other activities in which the organizations engage (Anonymous 1 2009; Anonymous 2 2009; Anonymous 3 2009; Burns 2009; Clubb 2009; Tipples 2009). Since most of the organizations have scarce resources, they appreciate the broad reach of media. Says Anonymous 1 (2009) "The media are extremely important because, not having the budget of a private corporation, [we find that] the media are a good way to get the information to the public." Other reasons why organizations pursue media coverage were to raise familiarity of the public with an organization and raise awareness of issues. For instance, Tipples (2009) said that the media were "extremely important" when Save Our Lake first formed, as news coverage introduced the public to the group. Now that the group is established and is better-known, the media are somewhat less important. Anonymous 2 (2009), who works with one of the province's conservation districts, says media are valuable to her organization because many residents are unsure of what conservation districts do and what programs they offer; the media provide a valuable way to educate residents about the organization's activities.

Phare (2009) admits that until recently the Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources "studiously avoided" the media. "For the first twelve years, we just saw that there were way more risks than benefits to dealing with the media." Now the Centre has decided it wants to reach out to non-aboriginal audiences and sees the media as an important way to do so.

5.4 Reactions to content analysis findings

Interview respondents were presented with a summary of findings from the content analysis outlined in Chapter 4, and reactions were solicited. Of interest to this research are comments on how the use of civil society sources and actors, as represented by the statistics, may

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[123] The initial "G" is used here to denote the interviewee from a K. Whelan-Enns who was also interviewed.

help or hinder participatory democracy, why the patterns detected might exist and, if interview respondents perceive the patterns shown by the content analysis to be problematic, what could be done to improve the situation.

Many of the interview respondents were not surprised that governments dominated as both sources and actors in news coverage (Bruce 2009; Lindsey 2009; Venema 2009). Lindsey (2009) says: "It supports what I thought intuitively… In some ways I can see it as fair enough. They're the elected government in power and what they are going to do is going to impact everybody. There is a need to report on that."

Several respondents pointed to the communications capacity of the provincial and federal levels of government as a main reason why governments are so highly featured as sources and actors. Lindsey (2009), Bruce (2009) and Anonymous 1 (2009) point to the large number of news releases generated by the government every day. Lindsey (2009) says: "They have full-time staff generating these things. They're sending stuff out on a constant basis." As discussed in section 5.8.4, civil society organizations rarely have such communications capacity and, as a result, often react to government news rather than proactively create news.

Lindsey (2009) also points out that the news media assign journalists to specific government beats, such as city hall, the provincial government and the federal government. "They're on the spot to get the idea, the plan and the policy, so it's not surprising that they would come out on top in terms of media coverage," she says. Public journalism would perhaps recommend a "civil society" beat to counter-balance the dominance of government.

Venema (2009) pointed to the fact that there are few organizations with the ability to comment on all issues related to water quality, as many organizations have specific focuses. Government agencies with a broader view of the situation than some other organizations are more able to offer a wide range of comments. Says Venema: "There aren't many non-governmental voices in Manitoba that have an overview of the Lake Winnipeg situation…there's a kind of integration that lake issues imply and [most] organizations are not institutionally oriented to that perspective."

Burns (2009) is somewhat concerned about some of the patterns indicated, and points to several possible reasons why they could exist. "Is it because in general the media view government as a more reliable source of information? A more credible source of information? Is that the reason? ... I'd love to know what the answer is." Therefore, she points to perceptions of

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credibility and reliability as sources as potential problems for civil society organizations accessing the news, as well as style of news releases.

Some interview respondents did not view the content analysis findings as very problematic. Upon reviewing the statistics, Anonymous 1 (2009) comments that "there are a diverse amount of sources," and did not feel that civil society was necessarily under-represented. While Brandon (2009) may not believe that the coverage is always ideal, he believes that civil society may be able to work within the pattern of government dominance, suggesting:

> One thing that strikes me is that you're going to be more successful if you can get a champion within government to take on your issue…If you can get them on board, you're going to have a much easier time reaching the media…If you're going to plan a press conference, if you can get a non-governmental person there, a government person there and maybe a farmer or a small business that's affected by the issue, *it doesn't really matter if your group is the first one quoted*. The important thing as an environmental activist is to get the issue covered. If you can get government and industry involved as participants and champions, you're going to have a lot more success (emphasis added).

Other respondents did feel that reliance on governmental sources, and the frequent use of government as defining sources for stories, was a problem (Anonymous 2 2009; Clubb 2009; G. Whelan-Enns 2009; K. Whelan-Enns 2009). G. Whelan-Enns (2009) bluntly asks: "Who changed the definition of what a free press is? Their job isn't to regurgitate what the government says." She worries that this problem is "at risk of increasing" if the news media continue to cut back on resources, and journalists do not have adequate time to seek out important issues, investigate them thoroughly and solicit a variety of viewpoints on topics.

Some respondents were concerned about civil society having a somewhat "weaker" voice in the news (Anonymous 2 2009; Kopelow 2009). Anonymous 2 (2009) feels that non-governmental organizations have valid information to contribute that may not always be communicated. In particular, she points to the fact that civil society organizations may face fewer immediate political pressures and, as such, have important, unhindered viewpoints to offer. "They're going to be a lot more honest. They don't really have as much oppression from above and they don't have to be such diplomats because nobody votes for them."

Some respondents expressed concern about the finding that civil society was more likely than elite sources to be the last source in articles. Lindsey (2009) commented: "It is unfortunate that often the NGOs and civil societies get almost relegated to an afterthought." One solution she

suggests is that organizations be more proactive. Others saw the pattern of civil society being the last source as a chance to "get the last word in" (Anonymous 1 2009; G. Whelan-Enns 2009).

Many respondents suggested that topics such as climate change and wetlands have been somewhat overlooked by the news media and were not surprised that the content analysis bore out these beliefs (Kopelow 2009; Pelletier 2009; Venema 2009).

One content analysis finding that surprised a number of interviewees was the low representation of First Nations governmental sources. One source pointed to the Water for Life conference held by the Southern Chiefs Organization in 2005, which brought in David Suzuki to speak. "It was one of the top three speeches in my life," he said (Anonymous 1 2009). The *Winnipeg Free Press* did publish some coverage of the conference (Staff 2005) but, in general, the use of First Nations government sources is extremely low. G. Whelan-Enns (2009) commented that she, too, has noticed that the current Southern Chiefs Organization head, Grand Chief Morris Shannacappo, is rarely included in news coverage, and she feels his opinion should be sought more often. She adds that the fact that the Organization is hosting a second water conference in 2010 indicates that the organization clearly cares a great deal about water quality.

Respondents speculated that geography, cultural differences and time restraints on journalists could be some reasons why First Nations government is included less. The fact that many First Nations communities are far from Winnipeg could be a contributing factor (though some respondents commented that some communities' proximity to Lake Winnipeg makes them valuable sources). Phare (2009) suggested that some First Nations representatives might be hesitant to speak with journalists, as well, in part due to cultural differences. "In our experience relationships are not built with one phone call or meeting." She says that relationships are important, and rarely do journalists seem to build such relationships with First Nations representatives in communities far from Winnipeg. For her organization, the Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources, the building of relationships and trust is essential.

Kopelow (2009) points to the fact that the creator of a film documentary on the lake, *Fat Lake: How Too Much of a Good Thing is Hurting Lake Winnipeg*, prominently featured First Nation perspectives. "Those people are out there…she [Filmmaker Lindsey Perkins] found aboriginal voices." Kopelow also suggests that their voices are particularly relevant, since First Nations people were among the first to indicate there was a problem with the health of the lake in the first place. "They spoke up on it for quite a few years in a row and were largely ignored."

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Phare (2009) suggests that First Nations people are all too often treated by the news media and government not as decision-makers (e.g. Chiefs) but as "users of the resources, like fishers. Or maybe people that maybe don't have enough, don't get enough, or have problems… But their legitimate role as decision-makers, as governments in this province, is completely overlooked." When asked if the reporting of comments of First Nations members of the Legislative Assembly, such as Oscar Lathlin, was at all equivalent to quoting First Nations government, Phare felt it was not. "He's not in the position to make decisions at a First Nations community level. He's not a member of First Nations government. He's now a member of a non-First Nations government…As a minister you represent everybody."

5.5 Interactions between civil society and the news media

Most of the interview participants categorized their interactions with journalists and the news media as fairly positive. Most could not point to an example of having their news "spun" by the media or taken badly out of context, though many were alert to that potential (Brandon 2009; Burns 2009; Kopelow 2009; Phare 2009). There was only one example of an interview participant who felt that the news media would deliberately create controversy by taking quotes "out of context" or using information "they know wasn't intended to be quoted" (Anonymous 2, 2009). While this interview participant admits her organization was in a "political situation" in some news coverage, she declined to provide details.

That unfortunate example aside, most interview participants had positive experiences with the media. Brandon (2009) feels that he has been respectfully treated, even on controversial issues about which he has been quoted.

> Most of the journalists that are sent on the environmental beat, though they might not be the most prestigious journalists, do seem to be genuinely concerned. They don't take your worst quote….I think the journalists that cover the issue seem to care about Lake Winnipeg and generally are committed and fairly environmentally aware. I think it's more an issue of them either being directed by other levels of management or space and time constraints that prevent the issues from being better covered.

Moreover, some journalists have been open to comments, feedback or guidance from civil society members. One interviewee has provided constructive criticism to *Winnipeg Free Press* reporters, and believes that his comments made an impression (Anonymous 3 2009). He explained to one journalist that the newspaper had "done a hell of a good job of making people

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aware there's a serious problem in the Lake but [hadn't] done a good job of making people aware of the nature of the problem. So, lo and behold, he did write an article that was down to earth and understandable. So you can get through to these guys sometimes, but not always."

5.5.1 Who contacts whom?

One interest of this thesis is the processes by which civil society organizations contribute to the news. For instance, do the media contact organizations for comment, or do the organizations proactively contact the media? For this question, the answer appears to vary among organizations, as well as the news publication or medium being considered; some organizations have had higher permeation into CBC coverage and smaller newspapers than into the *Winnipeg Free Press* (Anonymous 2 2009; Baron 2009; Dolecki 2009; Fefchak 2009; Pryzner 2009).

Some organizations said the news media rarely contacted them (Brandon 2009; Phare 2009; Tipples 2009) while others are contacted fairly frequently (Anonymous 3 2009; G. Whelan-Enns 2009). Interviewees from the IISD indicated that when *Winnipeg Free Press* reporter Helen Fallding covered the topic of Lake Winnipeg, she often contacted them for information or story ideas. Since her promotion to assistant editor and departure from the Lake Winnipeg "beat," Institute contact with the *Winnipeg Free Press* has been more about "green consumer issues than about Lake issues" (Pelletier 2009; Venema 2009).[124] Regardless, the Institute is fairly content with its access to the newspaper.

Conversely, some interviewees feel that their organizations should be contacted more frequently. Clubb (2009) feels that the *Free Press* relies on a limited number of civil society representatives, easy "go-to" sources, and believes they need to reach out to other, new sources.

While Kopelow (2009) says the Manitoba Water Caucus is not contacted frequently for quotes, she finds that the timeline of journalism does not fit well with her needs and timelines; while the Water Caucus is non-advocacy, and refrains from commenting publicly on most issues, many of its participant groups are able and willing to comment on water issues. However, when Kopelow receives a media call, requesting an immediate comment, she often does not have time to find an appropriate and available group. She explains: "One of the problems I've faced in receiving these calls is that it's always at the last minute and since we're dealing with volunteer-

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[124] Pelletier (2009) said journalist Lindsey Wiebe contacts them about green consumer issues for a monthly segment of the *Winnipeg Free Press*, "The Green Page."

based organizations that are often not located in Winnipeg, it's really hard to give them the right contact in time for them to meet a 4 p.m. deadline."

5.5.2 News releases and news conferences

There was also a great deal of variation regarding how much civil society organizations tried to engage the media and be included in coverage. Some groups fairly regularly contacted a variety of media outlets through such means as news releases, news conferences and telephone calls (Anonymous 1 2009; Reimer 2009; G. Whelan-Enns 2009). Others very rarely contacted the media (Anonymous 3 2009; Anonymous 2 2009; Burns 2009;[125] Kopelow 2009; Pelletier 2009; Tipples 2009).

News releases and news conferences are two of the most common ways through which groups of any kind – be they civil society organizations, governmental departments or business groups – can let the media know they have information that they consider newsworthy. Almost all of the civil society organizations interviewed for this thesis have used these media outreach tools at some point, to varying degrees of success.[126]

Some groups have found that news releases and news conferences are a good way to generate coverage of an issue (Anonymous 1 2009; Burns 2009; Lindsey 2009; Reimer 2009; G. Whelan-Enns 2009). Ducks Unlimited Canada was one of only two organizations[127] included in this study that has dedicated communications personnel and frequently sends out news releases both on a national and more targeted provincial scale. National Marketing and Communications Coordinator, Reimer (2009), says that increased media coverage is often evident when they have sent out a news release on a topic. The organization has hired a news tracking service to alert them to when their organization is included in the news, which allows Reimer to monitor media pick-up of news releases. "When we send out a press release, our media pickup is greater because we are making that conscious effort. If we were just to sit here and wait for the media to come we wouldn't have that pickup."

Manitoba Wildlands uses news releases not only for announcements, but also to let the media know it is available to comment on such things as speeches from the throne, the delivery

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[125] Burns does not contact the media frequently as coordinator of the Foundations in the Lake Winnipeg Watershed Initiative. She did, however, contact the media frequently when she was volunteering with Hog Watch.

[126] The one group that did not use news releases was Save Our Lake, as it relies more on non-media activities to reach the public.

[127] The other organization with communications personnel was the IISD.

of governmental budgets and election positions. They send out alerts on the mornings of these events. This approach increases the chance that the news media will contact them as a source for a story (G. Whelan-Enns 2009).

Burns, a member of the now less active Manitoban group, Hog Watch, also found news releases to be a useful tool. She says that, for Hog Watch, even more useful at times were news conferences, which drew as many as ten to fifteen members of the media, a number which is considered a good turn-out. One organization with which Anonymous 1 (2009) once worked also found news conferences to be a useful tool. Ducks Unlimited Canada also has found that news conferences increase their media pick-up, particularly when they partner with other groups; for instance, when they received funding in 2009 from the federal government for a specific wetland project, and held the news conference at their scenic national headquarters, media attendance was strong (Reimer 2009).

Clubb (2009) has had occasional success with both news releases and conferences, but notes that many attempts to attract media attention go unrewarded. She says that a "generous" estimate of media pick-up of press releases for one of the groups in which she is involved, the Mixedwood Forest Society, is 25%. She says that while she used to send out many news releases, she rarely sends them out these days, since she finds the effort does not pay off. She says they are often a "wasted effort…and we can't afford the low morale from that. I'm not going to do fifteen press releases if they come to nothing." Pryzner (2009) reports similarly low media pick-up of news releases.

Lindsey (2009) says that news releases and conferences can be very valuable, but that many members of civil society organizations do not have the training or experience to create a professional-looking media outreach tools. To increase civil society capacity in this area, her organization, the Manitoba Eco-Network, holds media skills workshops for its members. She says: "Most people come into this field with a great passion for something and many are volunteers with no experience in using the media. They have no clue how the media operates. I certainly didn't when I got started. It took people teaching me how to do it. There's an art to it."

Dolecki (2009) has a long history as a volunteer with civil society groups; he wrote press releases for the opposition to the Rafferty-Alameda project in the late 1980s, and today writes press releases for Citizens for the Responsible Application of Phosphorus and the Concerned Daly Ratepayers. He has observed changes in the media over these 30 years, and finds that it is

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now much harder to attract coverage for the issues in which he is involved, particularly by the major daily newspapers in Manitoba. During the Rafferty-Alameda controversy, press releases were often picked up and the rooms in which press conferences were held had good media attendance. In the 2000s, he has been unable to attract such media attention from the daily Winnipeg media. For example, the Concerned Daly Ratepayers issued "about a dozen" press releases when they were fighting a rather complicated situation in which the provincial government appeared to be pressuring the municipal government to allow a hog barn against the will of the majority of the rural municipality's residents, who were calling for a moratorium and by-law review.[128] Only the local media in and around Brandon, three hours from Winnipeg, covered the story in any depth.

The IISD was a bit unusual amongst the organizations studied for this thesis because for many of its programs it has an international mandate. The news releases it sends out are often on a "targeted" basis to a more international audience. Therefore, while it has a full-time communications person, and even has a reporting service based out of New York, it does not regularly send out news releases on a local level. However, the Institute's visible, local presence is likely to increase in the near future, as it is now the home of the newly created Water Innovation Centre, which will study the Lake Winnipeg basin as a "natural laboratory" in order to learn lessons that can be applied to watersheds around the world (IISD 2009). One of the three aims of this Centre is "community outreach and education, communications and marketing". Therefore, the news media may factor significantly into strategy for the Water Innovation Centre (Pelletier 2009). The Centre is currently in "soft launch" phase, and so most of the communications activity thus far has focused on activities such as blogging (see section 5.7), but Pelletier anticipates an increase in local news media outreach. Aside from the usual tools of news releases and conferences, the Institute has actively engaged journalists in some of its other initiatives through workshops for the journalists. In particular, the Institute's Global Subsidies Initiative has held workshops and regional media forums in various countries to educate journalists about the complex topic of subsidies and "the impacts that subsidies can have on the environment, economies and equity" (Global Subsidies Initiative n.d.; Vis-Dunbar 2007, 4; Vis-Dunbar 2008). However, the communications strategy is still in the "very early stages," cautions

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[128] For more information on this controversy, see Dolecki's presentation (2007) to the Manitoba Clean Environment Commission at http://www.cecmanitoba.ca/File/WSUB-005%20Joe%20Dolecki.pdf, specifically pages 24 to 28.

Pelletier, and no certainties could be provided at the time of data collection for the Lake Winnipeg communications strategy.

5.5.3 Meetings with media gatekeepers

According to communications theory, editors, publishers and other higher-ranking people in the news media act as "gatekeepers" for which news does and does not get published (Shoemaker and Reese 1996). In recognition of this reality, several civil society groups contacted for this thesis had spoken directly with editorial boards and managers.

Burns (2009) offered the most candid description of such attempts. In the early 2000s, she, as a representative of Hog Watch and the Winnipeg Humane Society, along with several other civil society members, met with the publisher of the *Winnipeg Free Press* to propose an idea – that the newspaper could emulate investigative journalism on the hog industry done by a North Carolina newspaper. North Carolina had also recently seen a huge increase in its hog industry, and was contending with various social, economic and environmental effects. The newspaper, the *News and Observer*, had produced a Pulitzer-prize winning series of articles.[129] Burns calls the publisher's response "illuminating" and "disappointing." "He basically said the Free Press is part of the corporate community in Manitoba and [it doesn't] want to be seen as opposing one of the major corporate players in Manitoba, and the various stakeholders in the hog industry." When Burns approached the general manager and news director of the local CTV television station, in the hopes that the negative effects of the hog industry could receive more coverage, she received a similar response.

Phare (2009) says that the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs also hoped the "gatekeepers" could be a route to more positive coverage for aboriginal issues. In the 1990s, they met with the *Winnipeg Free Press* editorial board to discuss whether or not the newspaper could attempt to alter the tone of some of its coverage on aboriginals; they were concerned that so many articles involving aboriginals focused on crime and poverty. The Assembly wanted to know if it would be possible to portray aboriginals in a more balanced way, including "success stories" and "progress stories", rather than focusing on "bad news" stories. Says Phare: "I understand that the message was well received by the editorial board but I've never done an analysis to say how things changed after that." While this request from the Assembly was hardly specific to Lake

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[129] To view the articles, go to http://www.pulitzer.org/archives/5892.

Winnipeg water quality issues, this researcher suggests that coverage of Lake Winnipeg could involve some positive coverage of aboriginal communities. For instance, the Southern Chiefs Organization has several environmental projects involving the lake, such as the 2005 creation of a First Nations Water Protection Council (Southern Chiefs Organization 2009). Council members are all Chiefs from Manitoban communities. Since the content analysis for this thesis found that aboriginal government members, such as Chiefs, were almost never quoted in articles (0.1% of sources), it appears that "good news" related to aboriginal efforts to help Lake Winnipeg may not yet have permeated news coverage.

5.5.4 Civil society organizations as background information providers

Not all interactions between the news media and civil society organizations are expected to result in the organization's perspective being included in a story. Many civil society organizations see themselves as information providers and as resources for background research by journalists. Amongst interviewees, these included Manitoba Wildlands (G. Whelan-Enns 2009; K. Whelan-Enns 2009) and the IISD (Pelletier 2009), an unnamed grassroots organization (Anonymous 1 2009) and an unnamed larger organization (Anonymous 3 2009).

One of the goals of Manitoba Wildlands is to provide information that is otherwise difficult to obtain. This information can often be complicated, the reports are often very long, and reporters facing deadlines are often overwhelmed with the mass of information. Manitoba Wildlands sees one of its roles as facilitating journalist understanding of this information, rather than just as an interview source. G. Whelan-Enns (2009) says: "Journalists often have our website open. We have a softer approach with the media…I spend a lot of time talking to journalists to give them background so they can talk to politicians. We don't view it as essential to be quoted…We provide information, background, and sometimes even questions to ask." For instance, she says the organization helped journalists analyze a governmental discussion paper about Manitoba's Water Protection Act before it was passed into law in 2005.

The IISD also often provides background information. While the Institute generally restricts media comments to its research, it is willing to help journalists find accurate information. Says Media and Communications officer, Pelletier:

We'd like to see our name in every story, but realistically that's not going to happen, and that's ok. That's not the measure of our success. We are in the business of change. If we see some change for sustainable development, and we feel we have taken part in some way, that's the measure of our success. Helping a journalist find a news source to go to and get that special information – that's what journalists need today. We've moved to meet those needs. We've upped the resources we have available, as journalists are perhaps struggling to get those resources.

Pelletier says that part of the Institute's communications role is to put journalists in contact with people who can speak knowledgeably on the topic the journalist is covering. Other organizations also said they saw their role as a liaison between the media and quotable sources – not actually as an interview source. The Manitoba Water Caucus and the Manitoba Eco-Network are two organizations that are non-advocacy and, as such, restrict their own comments, but willingly connect journalists with interview sources (Kopelow 2009; Lindsey 2009).

5.5.5 Op-Ed pieces

Many respondents stated that Op-Ed pieces in the *Winnipeg Free Press* are valuable ways to reach the public. However, only some respondents who had attempted to have such pieces published succeeded (Baron 2009; Lindsey 2009; Venema 2009). Others, who have made attempts, or knew of other civil society members who have made attempts, said that it was difficult to have Op-Ed pieces accepted by newspapers, particularly by the *Winnipeg Free Press* (Anonymous 1 2009; Clubb 2009; Pryzner 2009; G. Whelan-Enns 2009).

Clubb (2009) has had success getting letters to the editor published, and even had letters chosen to be "letter of the day," but has never managed to have an Op-Ed piece published, though she has submitted several. She has found submission to the Op-Ed section discouraging and says she is now "jaded" after having so many pieces declined. G. Whelan-Enns (2009) has also submitted Op-Ed pieces to no avail. She suggests: "The gateway on Op-Eds (in the *Winnipeg Free Press*) is far too narrow in terms of what gets printed and what doesn't."

Those writers who have had pieces accepted have had experiences that range from easy to more difficult. Lindsey (2009) has not written specifically on the Lake Winnipeg issue, but has written about other environmental subjects. She recounts that it took some persuasion to get the newspaper to publish a piece that suggested using nuclear power as a solution to climate change could result in "double jeopardy." Lindsey says that the editor to whom she spoke was

"sceptical" about the topic. "My experience is it takes a little bit of pressure to convince the editor that your topic is worthy and that you are indeed a writer of sufficient quality that they can publish what you wrote." In order to convince the editor, Lindsey wrote the article with no guarantee of having it published, and then sent it to the editor for consideration. Upon seeing the piece, the editor agreed to publish it.

Venema (2009) also said it took "persistence" to get his Op-Ed pieces published in the *Winnipeg Free Press*. The Media and Communications Officer of the IISD made a "deliberate effort" to draw the pieces to the attention of the commentary page editor; "It was fairly consistent personal contact on her part to get us access." "That's the advantage of an institute like the IISD, where you can actually assign someone to do that follow-up. Quite frankly, I enjoyed writing the piece, but I don't know if it would have been published without the persistence of our communications officer." The perseverance paid off; Venema has had three Op-Ed pieces published in the *Winnipeg Free Press* (Venema 2005, 2007, 2009), more than any other civil society group interested in Lake Winnipeg water quality.

Unlike the experiences of writers in the above examples, Baron (2009) had a fairly easy time of getting the newspaper to accept his Op-Ed piece that criticized the hog industry's claim that it contributes only 1% of nutrient loading to Lake Winnipeg (Baron 2007). He says that he contacted the editor of the Op-Ed page by e-mail, and that his proposal was well-received. The only slight frustration was that it took time for the piece to be published, since the editor said other topics were more time-sensitive. Baron feels the piece did raise awareness. However, he was disappointed that he was not able to create a debate about the issue, even though two letters were published that negatively critiqued his piece, one by the scientist who came up with the statistic that the hog industry contributes 1% of pollution (Flaten 2007), and one by the chairman of the Manitoba Pork Council (Kynoch 2007). Baron would have liked to respond to their comments, particularly since he felt their letters did not address in detail his core concern, surplus phosphorus in the soil caused by over-application of hog manure. He suggested that the letters deflected his criticism, and he would have preferred to have responded in the pages of the newspaper to create a meaningful debate. Instead, the response from the newspaper was, essentially, "You've had your say and they've had theirs" (Baron 2009). From the perspective of governance and democracy, this one-time presentation of opinion may not do as much to inform the public on different perspectives as could a sustained debate.

5.5.6 Letters to the editor

Data from the interviews suggest that the letter to the editor section is the easiest way to access the news, easier than sending out news releases or attempting to have the newspaper accept an Op-Ed piece. Several interview respondents had letters published by the *Winnipeg Free Press* (Burns 2009; Clubb 2009; Dolecki 2009; Fefchak 2009; Lindsey 2009; Tipples 2009; Venema 2009). In a number of cases, the civil society organization with which they were affiliated was also noted in the letter.

Anonymous 1 (2009) says there are a number of "word warriors" in Manitoba that consistently raise environmental issues through letters to the editor. Clubb (2009) is one such "word warrior." Of the 89 letters between 1991 and 2008 identified by this research on the topic of Lake Winnipeg, she wrote four, the most of any individual. Only the Manitoba Pork Council had more letters published, at five letters. Clubb suggests her letters are frequently published because she has "figured out the formula. Keep it short, and you have to have a good punch line." She believes that the letters can affect governance about Lake Winnipeg to some degree, because many decision-makers are aware of what is said on these pages. While she is happy to have access to this section, and believes that letters are somewhat effective because they "raise awareness" and "get people thinking," she sees them as a far from ideal vehicle for civil society. She would prefer to contribute Op-Ed pieces because they are longer, more credible, more salient, and allow for greater depth of information.

Clubb says that it can be difficult to have even letters accepted. "In the environmental community, we feel there is censorship at the Free Press editorial board for environmental content in letters." She knows of many letters that were sent to newspapers that were not published. While it is perhaps impossible to publish all letters sent to a newspaper, she feels there is a bias in the selection process at many news publications. "Many, many more letters have gone in about the issue – volumes – that haven't been published." Other interview respondents also felt there was unequal treatment of letter writers, generally favouring industry and the provincial government (Dolecki 2009; Fefchak 2009; Pryzner 2009).

Numerous other interviewees also questioned the selection process of letters. When told that the Manitoba Pork Council had the most letters published of any group, Burns mused: "one thing that we don't know is, how many letters were written on the other side? Were there the

same number of letters written by a group against the industry and the *Free Press* just chose not to publish them? Or was it that not that many people wrote in? They definitely have the opportunity to decide what to publish and I have no idea how they discriminate."

Lindsey (2009) does have an idea of how the *Winnipeg Free Press* chooses which letters it publishes. She once asked an editor at the newspaper how decisions were made. She was told they were, "looking for opinion, as opposed to fact. If you state too many facts you might not get published." When she writes letters, she now ensures she includes some opinion in order to increase the chances her piece will be published.

Prolific letter writer Fefchak (2009), who writes about water quality and many other topics, says that his letter acceptance rate at the *Winnipeg Free Press* is quite low. He estimates that he sends twelve letters to the newspaper each year, and has perhaps only two published. "It's a little disheartening," he comments. He says he was compelled to begin writing letters when the hog industry began to expand in Manitoba. "I couldn't see the rationale for it," he says. Therefore, he began to voice his concerns in newspapers. However, he feels that many of his views have not been heard, and worries that the public does not have all of the information it needs to understand the related environmental concerns. For instance, one letter that was not published suggested that Manitoba have an independent water commissioner make recommendations to Water Stewardship and the Clean Environment Commission; he is concerned that the provincial government itself is not adequately independent from agriculture, since Manitoba's economy is tied into farming (Fefchak 2009 "Environment"). He has had more luck getting his letters published in smaller, more rural, newspapers, as discussed in section 5.6, but he believes it is important to access Winnipeg's urban audience as well.

Several interviewees noted that the *Free Press* is more likely to choose short letters, while smaller, often rural papers are more likely to publish longer letters (Clubb 2009; Dolecki 2009; Fefchak 2009; Pryzner 2009). Dolecki (2009) says he has had two-page letters published in the *Brandon Sun*, but that the *Winnipeg Free Press* simply does not allow such length. Some view this predilection for short letters as problematic for people who actually have detailed knowledge to share. Pryzner (2009) rarely submits letters to the *Winnipeg Free Press* because she says they must be short to the degree that they have little meaning. "Especially when you're dealing with a complicated issue or policy problem. You can't engage in any kind of debate with the letters to the editor…you can't get a dialogue going in any meaningful way because you can't

do anything other than express a really simple opinion. Then, all it becomes is a question of people giving their opinions without any facts to back it up."

Despite this drawback of letters in the *Winnipeg Free Press* being short, Dolecki knows they have some effect. One particular example is when a letter was written, and published, in response to one of his. In his letter, Dolecki explained a situation in the rural municipality of Daly, in which the Concerned Daly Ratepayers, a group in which he is involved, was trying to prevent hog barn developments, but was having its efforts stymied by municipal and provincial levels of government (Dolecki 2003). Days later, the *Winnipeg Free Press* published a letter written by a person in the rural municipality of Whitemouth, more than 300 kilometres from Dolecki's location, indicating that the situation in her location was similar. She writes: "Our community is just beginning the grassroots process outlined by Dolecki in his article. We, too, are wondering if the council will make the right decision based on the democratic concerns of the overwhelming majority of the community and not on the strong-arm or scare tactics of the proponents, the industry or the government" (Elphick 2003). Dolecki said that this letter indicates to him that letters are important, as they allow for "information sharing." Similar situations were occurring throughout the province and the *Winnipeg Free Press*, the most widely-read newspaper in the province, was a vehicle through which people in different rural municipalities could read about what was transpiring throughout the province. While a full-fledged debate did not occur on the topic of hog barns in the letters to the editor section, important connections were evidently made.

5.6 Smaller news publications

While many of the interview participants expressed it would be beneficial for their organizations to have a greater presence in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, many also felt that smaller newspapers, such as weeklies, university newspapers, agricultural newspapers and alternative publications were very important in reaching the public (Anonymous 3 2009; Anonymous 2 2009; Anonymous 1 2009; Baron 2009; Brandon 2009; Dolecki 2009; Fefchak 2009; Lindsey 2009; Pryzner 2009; Reimer 2009; Tipples 2009). Numerous interview participants suggested that, depending on the goal that they are trying achieve, these publications may actually be more important to them than is the *Winnipeg Free Press* (Anonymous 2 2009; Pryzner 2009; Reimer 2009; Tipples 2009). Many groups have also enjoyed easier access to these smaller media.

Reimer (2009) stressed the ability of smaller, rural newspapers to get certain messages from Ducks Unlimited Canada to rural people; many of Ducks Unlimited Canada's programs are in rural areas. Therefore, while Ducks Unlimited Canada has had some fairly high-profile pieces in the *Winnipeg Free Press,* such as a commentary written by the executive vice-president of the organization (Edwards 2007), smaller newspapers are at times better vehicles for reaching the organization's target audiences.

An employee of one of the province's eighteen conservation districts says that the local papers in her area are the most important for spreading her organization's message. Since this conservation district is in a largely rural area, she says the urban *Winnipeg Free Press* is less relevant to the audience that the organization wishes to reach (Anonymous 2 2009).

Anonymous 3 (2009) also says some of the more comprehensive and continuous coverage he has seen is from the local newspaper that covers news in the area surrounding the south end of Lake Winnipeg, the *Interlake Spectator.* He praises one reporter in particular, award-winning editor Jim Mosher, for his writing. "…[H]e's very close to the issue, and he speaks with us fairly frequently. He listens, and he's got an idea of what the real issue is." Anonymous 3 feels that many other newspapers focus too much on creating attention-grabbing, but perhaps inaccurate, headlines, while Mosher has offered coverage more sensitive to the actual situation. However, the Spectator's reach is limited, reaching only about 30,000 people.[130] "What about the rest of the 6.6 million? If the *big guys* would do that, boy that would really help turn this issue around" (Anonymous 3 2009).

That said, Lindsey (2009) can provide evidence that citizens pay attention to the smaller newspapers. Her organization, the Manitoba Eco-Network, advertises organic lawn care workshops through various means, including posters, media releases, public service announcements and advertisements in weekly newspapers. Attendees to these workshops "overwhelmingly" learned about them through the weekly newspapers.

Numerous letter-to-the-editor writers interviewed for this research also praised smaller newspapers for allowing them to voice their views (Clubb 2009; Dolecki 2009; Fefchak 2009; Pryzner 2009). Fefchak, for instance, is able to get his letters printed more frequently in smaller

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[130] The Manitoba Community Newspapers Association (2009) reports that the *Interlake Spectator* reaches a population of 31,000 people.

newspapers, such as the *Brandon Sun*, the *Steinbach Carillon,* the *Interlake Spectator, The Manitoba Co-operator* and the *Western Producer.*

5.7 Civil society as news manufacturer

One unforeseen pattern in the interview data was the prominence and importance of "news" publications created by civil society organizations themselves. Many interview respondents emphasized the importance of organizational newsletters, tabloids, online news provision on their web sites and even pre-prepared "radio minutes" created for radio dissemination (Burns 2009; Brandon 2009; Kopelow 2009; Pelletier 2009; Reimer 2009; Red River Basin Commission n.d.).

Dolecki (2009), an economics professor by career, describes the underlying concept:

There's an old principle in political geography about the existence of space and the creation of space for advancing a collective objective. In some cases, people appropriate space that is pre-existing. For example, in Poland, during the Solidarnosc days,[131] they appropriated the space provided by the [labour] union and the Catholic Church…

So, there's the business of moving into space that's already pre-existing. But then there's the creation of new space that people do in the course of organizing in relation to some objective. It's a constant question about which you can use most efficiently and effectively. One of the areas that is an *existing area* for space that can be appropriated and utilized is the media, *the newspapers*. And they're kind of closed off, right? So the question is, what other space is being used? (emphasis added)

The data gleaned from interviews indicate that many organizations are, indeed, creating new spaces for their information, thereby surpassing at times the existing, traditional spaces.

The IISD had perhaps the most developed organization-created news products. Pelletier (2009) suggests that the atmosphere of the news media is changing, and that organizations such as hers can step in to fill a void in information left by traditional news media changes such as cutbacks.

If there are no journalists to cover our stories because we're 'special' news, then the alternative is for us to produce good quality pieces which are suitable for running in newspapers...[Public relations] is much more than news releases today…We're well-placed to produce our own materials and have them credibly received…It's definitely a trend.

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[131] Solidarnosc (Solidarity) was a Polish non-governmental trade union and social movement in Poland in the 1980s that greatly contributed to the change from communist to democratic government in 1989. As such, it was part of Polish civil society (Magner 2005).

One of the new avenues that the Institute is exploring is the creation of a series of interviews with experts on sustainability, known as the "Thought Leader Interview Series." These video or audio interviews are posted on the Institute's web site and feature such well-known figures as author and environmental activist, Vandana Shiva. To date, no interviews related to Lake Winnipeg have been done for this series, but as activities of the Water Innovation Centre increase, the topic could be linked into the Thought Leaders program.[132] Says Pelletier of the series: "It's important because journalists today are so stressed and under-resourced in ability and time. A lot of the really important interviews might not be getting done. We know that this is important, which is why we reached out and started doing it."

The main way in which the IISD has so far created media on Lake Winnipeg is through the use of blogs, says Pelletier. "We've been using blogging to inform people directly rather than going through a media release," she explains. According to the official description of the blog, it "features news, information and commentary as part of [the Institute's] mission to champion sustainable development around the world through communication and innovation" (IISD n.d.). Topics that relate to Lake Winnipeg discussed so far in the blog have emerged from Institute research on how to assess the sustainability of a watershed's water resources (Pelletier 2009 "sustainable water management"), the topic of how the harvesting of cattails in marshes could improve lake health, as well as provide a source of bioenergy (Pelletier 2009 "cattails") and the topic of whether or not wetlands could help reduce flooding in the Red River valley (Grosshans 2009). Links to the blog are featured on the Institute's home page, making the news vehicle more visible to site users. Pelletier says that some of the blog postings are read by a few hundred people.

There are several benefits to the blog, says Pelletier. For example, the blog is a good way to begin raising awareness about new research that the Institute has published; as momentum behind a topic builds, it may or may not make it into the news. Explains Pelletier: "We know we are at the leading edge. We will put papers out that we know few people will read because they don't see it as relevant in the daily news. And they're right…Some of the work that we're releasing is not relevant at the time. But, hey, fast-forward a year or two and the work is relevant.

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[132] The exact communications activities of the Water Innovations Centre have not yet been fully planned. Nevertheless, an interview with water expert Dr. David Schindler on the topic of increasing eutrophication around the world might be an appropriate interview for the Thought Leaders Interview Series.

So some of the work we've done in the past becomes relevant in the future. We're using the blog to point people back to our work." The blog allows the Institute to accomplish two goals: first, to reach the specific people, such as other researchers, who are keenly interested in the Institute's work and, second, to allow a more general public to access the Institute's work in a more informal way. Furthermore, many of the blogs include multiple links to related research papers, related web sites, researcher descriptions and detailed explanations of terms. In a way, these are similar to sidebars in newspapers.

The blog also allows for more opinion than is normally offered by the Institute. It is perhaps somewhat akin to commentaries in newspapers. While the Institute is still cautious about publishing much opinion in this way, Pelletier says they are "experimenting" with the option, and they still ensure that what is published is "informed opinion." For example, the blog that offered some Institute opinions on the Flood in 2009 was fairly new territory (Grosshans 2009).

The Institute also has twenty mailing lists on different topics (e.g. water), to which interested people could subscribe. Pelletier does not know whether or not any journalists are subscribed, but suggests it could be a useful resource if a journalist specializes on a certain environmental topic. Related to these lists are the IISD Reporting Services, which provide "a variety of multimedia informational resources for environment and sustainable development policymakers, including daily coverage of international negotiations, analyses and photos"(IISD Reporting Services n.d.). Pelletier explains that the Reporting Services are seen as an objective source of information. Objectivity is, of course, a traditional goal of journalism.

The Manitoba Water Caucus produced a more local version of its own media vehicle in 2008, a free four-page tabloid called *Around the Lake Winnipeg Watershed*. Placed in sites that the public visits, such as coffee houses, restaurants and universities, the attractive, full-colour tabloid highlighted the threat to Lake Winnipeg from nutrient loading and emphasized the large size of the watershed and the many drainage basins it encompasses. In order to create these tabloids (the water caucus has also produced ones on other topics, such as groundwater), the caucus solicits ideas from the public and "caters to what municipalities think is important…" (Kopelow 2009).

The Red River Basin Commission also produces its own media products and has found local radio stations and newspapers receptive to publishing its materials. For print media, the Commission produces a series of articles collectively called *The Ripple Effect*, many of which

relate to water quality. These articles are "sent out weekly to Red River Basin newspapers" (Red River Basin Commission n.d.). Two radio stations, one in Manitoba and one in North Dakota, also broadcast "Ripple Effect Water Minutes."

Lindsey (2009) believes that because the general news media tend to oversimplify news, specialized environmental publications by non-governmental organizations are essential. Her organization publishes the *Eco-Journal* five times a year to provide a vehicle for detailed environmental news.

> I'd say the media operates on the sound bite, even the print media these days. There's a push to simplify and shorten. That can sometimes be a problem because a lot of these issues are a little bit complex…It's important to generate your own media. Do your own publication, whether it be web-based, print or podcasts. Get your own word out there and become part of the mass of information….If we allow the media giant to control all the information, that's a big mistake. We need to get it out more broadly.

One caveat to the creation of printed news is that an organization has to be able to pay for printing. Anonymous 3 (2009) says that while his organization prepares a newsletter, the group would "go broke if [they] published it [on paper]." Therefore, the newsletter is only available online.

In addition, several interviewees questioned the effectiveness of some of the newer ways in which organizations disseminate information. Dolecki (2009) is highly sceptical of such innovations as Facebook and online petitions, calling them "alienating."

> What's important is face-to-face stuff, talking with people. It takes no effort and no commitment at all to write an e-mail and push send. You get this feeling that you're doing something spectacular when you're actually doing nothing. Your energies could be utilized more concretely in other direct ways

> There's a lot of difference between 1,000 people signing a structured email to the minister of such and such and 1,000 people showing up at his office. But showing up at his office is too much work, right?

Venema (2009) is also unsure about how beneficial new technologies are, saying "I'm open-minded. I'd like to be convinced that alternative electronic media have any lasting influence, and that decision-makers are responsive to what's transpiring. If I saw the evidence, we'd be exploiting it more at the IISD." Interestingly, this thesis research has actually found the Institute to be utilizing alternative media more than other organizations interested in water quality, as noted earlier in this section.

Pelletier (2009) suggests that the new developments in information dissemination, such as the IISD's development of its own news materials, have changed the face of the media landscape: "If you ask me how important *Winnipeg Free Press* coverage is, I say 'very important,' but is it as important as it used to be? Maybe not, because there is a new world out there, a new reality in terms of how information is disseminated."

5.8 A gap amongst civil society organizations in Manitoba
5.8.1 The need for a well-funded advocacy group

A number of interview participants agreed that one problem with governance for Lake Winnipeg is that there is no well-funded advocacy group for the issue (Anonymous 1 2009; Baron 2009; Burns 2009; Clubb 2009; Dolecki 2009; Kopelow 2009; Phare 2009; G. Whelan-Enns 2009; K. Whelan-Enns 2009).

A large number of the organizations with an interest in Lake Winnipeg consider themselves "neutral." Numerous interviewees stated that advocacy is not their mandate (Anonymous 2 2009; Anonymous 3 2009; Brandon 2009; Kopelow 2009; Phare 2009). This position could in some ways limit their outreach to the media; while groups might send out press releases about events they are hosting, or other non-controversial subjects, they are less likely to contact the media about their "positions" on topics.

It may be perfectly reasonable for groups to choose not to pursue advocacy. However, a problem in the Lake Winnipeg watershed appears to be that almost all groups are non-advocacy. There is no balance between advocacy and non-advocacy groups. Says Clubb (2009): "There are always going to be non-advocates. We need advocates!" She believes a non-advocacy position significantly limits a group's presence in the media.

A number of groups that limit their advocacy activities are "umbrella organizations," representing their members when they speak. These include the Manitoba Eco-Network, the Manitoba Water Caucus and Community Foundations of Canada, which includes the Foundations in the Lake Winnipeg Watershed Initiative (Brandon 2009; Burns 2009; Lindsey 2009). Lindsey (2009) explains that the Manitoba Eco-Network provides resources to groups that may wish to carry out advocacy and holds workshops to help them gain media skills. "We encourage our member groups and also have workshops to help them reach out to the media. We as an organization would have to have the consensus of all our groups [in order to advocate]."

Phare (2009) says the Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources also must get permission from its board before it can take a position on anything. It has only been authorized to do so once, in support of the Kyoto protocol. "We're not the type of non-governmental organization that has positions…Our mission is a bit different. If the media wants a position, they won't get it from us. But if they want to understand an issue in greater depth we certainly have a lot of people who would be able to help them." That said, Phare believes there is still a pressing need for one or more strong organizations to fill the advocacy niche. "For years I've lamented the fact that we don't have a real advocacy group focused on water, or even on the environment. We [Manitoba] have networks but not a position organization."

Other groups are also research-oriented, similar to the Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources, and carry out little or no advocacy. Anonymous 3 (2009) says of his group: "we're not an advocacy group at all. And that may disappoint some people…We just produce information that wasn't there before that's going to help everyone from the premier down to the everyday citizen make the right choices."

G. Whelan-Enns (2009) is quite doubtful about the effectiveness of civil society organizations for Lake Winnipeg. She believes that ties to government and other funders limit their advocacy activities. "What we've got are GONGOs: Government Organized Non-Governmental Organizations."

Clubb (2009) recognizes the value of the work of these and other non-advocacy organizations, but feel they are only useful to democracy up to a point. "Lake Winnipeg is still in trouble…it's good that they're doing it [public education], but we need more than that! Action doesn't happen without advocacy. Education is only part of what needs to be done."

Given the large number of non-advocacy groups, and small number and size of advocacy groups, many interviewees commented on the need to create one or more advocacy-oriented groups for Lake Winnipeg. Anonymous 1 (2009) suggests advocacy groups are needed to "keep an eye on whether or not the government is doing what it says it would, [to] criticize government and [to] hold them to task. Some of that could play out in the media." He suggests that government is sometimes "talking" more than it is "acting" to help Lake Winnipeg; the role of an advocacy group would be to comment when adequate progress is not being made. No current group working for Lake Winnipeg seems to do so.

Burns (2009) similarly says an advocacy group is much-needed to put pressure on government. "Things are happening way too slowly. We could be doing things faster. We need to be doing things faster…Government isn't out of the goodness of their heart going to change things. They need an intelligent voice to be really pressing them." She feels that the news media could be a major vehicle for the work of an advocacy group. She even surmises, though she has no hard proof, that there may be less coverage on Lake Winnipeg at times because there is no advocacy group to maintain the public's attention on water quality.

Several interviewees suggested that one reason many civil society organizations are not in the news is because they are intimidated by the media. Some fear misrepresentation, having their information taken out of context, or being made to appear foolish. Others may simply not be confident having their words on record in the news media. This trepidation could be one explanation for lower prominence of some organizations in the news.

Burns, in particular, emphasized this reality among Manitoban civil society organizations, saying that the "availability and willingness" of organizations may limit the voices of civil society. "My impression is, in Manitoba, there are a fair number of environmental groups that just don't feel comfortable or confident talking to the media and so, therefore, they wouldn't call [journalists] back. You're not going to get coverage if you're not responding…[T]hey don't trust the media and they don't see how the media can actually help them."

Lindsey (2009), too, says there is disinclination in some environmental groups to speak with the media; she suggests that sometimes they are afraid to jeopardize funding (see discussion below, section 5.8.2), and sometimes they do not have a member comfortable being interviewed. Her organization, the Manitoba Eco-Network, often tries to connect journalists with its member groups. However, these attempts are not always successful. "If the media are calling for a particular subject where we know one of our member groups has a lot of expertise we will refer to that group. In some cases, despite the Manitoba Eco-Network asking its member groups to comment on an issue, groups are for whatever reason reluctant to speak to the media." In these instances, the Eco-Network itself will often offer the media a comment so that there is not as much of a "gap" in voices in the news. However, as already noted, the Eco-Network is limited in its ability to take positions, due to its structure; its member groups would be more able to do so.

To counter such fear, the Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources is training some of its staff to interact with the media. For instance, the managers at the Centre went

through a "media training session," in which they experienced "mock interviews," and were counselled on how to conduct themselves with "the worst reporter you could have" (Phare 2009). This kind of training can help employees become more confident with the media.

While training can help one prepare for media encounters, there may be no way to prepare for another consequence of being vocal, experienced by one interview respondent: retaliation by those in the community who disagree with their views (Pryzner 2009). Pryzner has been very vocal in both news media and non-media venues: she belongs to several civil society groups (Concerned Daly Ratepayers; Citizens for the Responsible Application of Phosphorus), has been a municipal councillor, has made presentations at provincial hearings and has often engaged the news media in her activities. The destruction of her mailbox was the most startling manifestation of how her advocacy in civil society brings out the incivility in some disgruntled residents. "We found it at the end of our lane totally smashed. That's a message. I've been threatened… people in your own community will punish you." She has also had some residents treat her with disrespect in person. Pryzner says she can "live with" reactions such as this, and will not mute her activities. However, she believes the potential for such hostility may deter some people from participating in civil society.

5.8.2 Fear of jeopardizing funding as a limitation to media engagement

Another commonly cited reason why some civil society organizations may be hesitant to speak with the media is that they fear losing their funding sources. They may be concerned about risking their charitable status and, therefore, disqualifying themselves for many grants and tax-deductible donations, as discussed in section 5.8.3. Even non-registered charities may fear losing other funding sources they have, such as governmental, business or private ones.

Several interviewees cited one example, in particular, in which a civil society group with an interest in Lake Winnipeg and which received government funding was penalized for being "vocal". As a result of some advocacy-oriented comments, government funding was withheld for several months. The organization's response was to a) alter its activities to be less objectionable to government and b) to seek some alternative funding so that it was not 100% reliant on the government.

Tipples (2009) says that her group, Save Our Lake, had recently applied for significant provincial and federal funding to help create a lagoon connected to a managed wetland, and

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admits that the potential of these funds is making them more "leery" about being vocal. Says Tipples: "Even we, in our small ways, have to be careful. Big Brother is watching and you can't put your foot wrong."

Few representatives of other groups stated that they, themselves, altered their activities for fear of losing funding. However, many interviewees said they knew of other groups that had, or that they suspected had (Anonymous 1 2009; Anonymous 2 2009; Clubb 2009; Dolecki 2009; Phare 2009; Pryzner 2009; G. Whelan-Enns 2009). Some saw the expectation that groups would be less vocal as a reasonable trade-off for accessing money. Phare (2009) offers: "At least two groups I know of have said they won't take a position because they get money from Manitoba Hydro and don't want it jeopardized. You can understand it from the other side. If it's your money and you give it to people that criticize you, you don't want to do that." As a result of this situation, she would like to find a way in which funding could be independent of advocacy. "I think you need to create a legitimate forum that allows these things to be talked about…The problem is there's no real forum to talk so you end up with people having to make statements in the media."

G. Whelan-Enns, whose group, Manitoba Wildlands, does not receive government funds, does not believe the current arrangement is best for democracy. "Almost every environmental organization in the province, but not us, has now got core funding from the provincial government. You get farther and farther away from a voice." Dolecki (2009) comments that government funding can nearly turn a group into "an arm of government…You have organizations that have either been reduced to being cheerleaders for a particular government or people that are like another layer of bureaucracy between civil society and the state. It's rather curious, but it's a neat trick…Nobody wants to bite the hand feeds you."

He and others suggest that those government-funded groups that do speak to the media are very "cautious" about what they say. Clubb characterizes government or grant-funded groups that speak to the media as very "safe" and "conservative" in what they say. "They're constricted because of the nature of their funding. They can't do their work unless they tow the line." Clubb, who works with both grant-funded organizations and independently-funded organizations says the grand-funded Mixedwood Forest Society members are somewhat more limited in their ability to speak out.

We don't get any funding if we attach the word 'advocate' to anything…That's how the government has set us up to censor our voices. There is no funding available anywhere in Canada for any kind of advocacy. Advocacy, in my mind, is advocating on behalf of the environment, usually in political venues, because that's where the decision-making takes place. You can *not* get funding for it.

Sometimes euphemisms can be used to classify activities as "capacity-building" or "educational." Clubb and others with government-funded organizations say that a lot of activities that are vocal can still be classified as "educational" (Clubb 2009; Lindsey 2009; Phare 2009). However, Clubb maintains that it is not a fair arrangement. There is almost no way to fund advocacy in Canada and, therefore, numerous interview participants have paid for their advocacy activities themselves and are, quite frankly, resentful that the law prevents them from getting a salary or funding for their work, which is done in the public interest.

Comments Dolecki: "Everything that I have done is in relation to the public interest and apart from [some fund-raising for court cases] I haven't had any cash from anybody. I don't work for anybody. So I'm civil society along with all these people that you've been talking to who are salaried, right?"

Remarks Clubb: "As soon as you get the money, you're on the hook…There is a penalty to pay when you receive a salary." She (2009) points out that government-affiliated groups are "the ones who get paid, they're the ones who are answering the phone with staff. Maybe they don't have enough money for everything, but they have some core money. You won't find a grant anywhere in Canada for core funding for a group that is affiliated with advocacy." Those interviewees who are proponents of advocacy all saw the news media as key to advocacy activities (Anonymous 1 2009; Burns 2009; Clubb 2009; Fefchak 2009; Pryzner 2009).

5.8.3 Charitable status as a possible limitation to media engagement

This research also explored whether or not subsection 149.1 of the *Income Tax Act* (as described in section 3.4.1), which restricts "political activities" of charities to 10 to 20% of funding, might affect media outreach activities. Interview findings suggested that some registered charities could be limiting their interactions with the media and with other vehicles of governance, for fear of being perceived as "political." Interviewees generally linked "political" and "advocacy" activities. Most respondents suggested that subsection 149.1 is a detriment to participatory democracy.

First, it should be noted that while most of the interview respondents were aware of the regulation, many were not sure exactly which activities would be considered "political" under the law. One respondent (Anonymous 1 2009) thought that the rule only applied to lobbying, which he defines as "going and meeting a member of parliament and pressuring them to change legislation.'" As detailed in section 3.4.1 much more than just lobbying of government officials falls under subsection 149.1.

In fact, meeting with governmental representatives is allowed to some degree. Lindsey (2009) calls the legislation a "grey area" in charitable work. A well-known and experienced environmentalist in the province, she says that she only recently learned that charitable organizations are allowed to spend significant amounts of their time meeting with elected politicians and speaking to government officials regarding their areas of expertise without it being considered political. "As a charity with an interest in the environment there's nothing stopping you from using 50% of your resources to go ensure that your elected representatives know about your issue."[133] Therefore, these two members of environmental groups had significantly different understandings of the law. It was also evident from interviews that several other respondents perceived meeting with politicians as political and, therefore, limited under the law. The issues of clarity in subsection 149.1 are evidently still a problem, even after the federal government attempted to address the vagueness of the law in 2003.

Several of the registered charities consulted said it is quite possible that the regulation affects their work, including their potential outreach to the news media. Clubb (2009) of the Mixedwood Forest Society said that this law limits the organization's effectiveness.

> We have to warp what we're doing, and disguise what we're doing and water it down to the point where there is almost no message in order to acquire funding to get something out. We don't have money for intervening on behalf of the public for major political decisions that have gone on for legislative changes that end up affecting what happens to water quality.

When Clubb has been involved in political activities, such as making presentations at Manitoba Clean Environment Commission hearings, it has been on her own dime, or through one of the groups with which she works that are not registered charities.

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[133] A caveat should be attached to this statement. In order to be considered charitable, representations to politicians must be "subordinate to the charity's purposes," be well-reasoned (defined as "a position based on factual information that is methodically, objectively, fully, and fairly analyzed. In addition, a well-reasoned position should present/address serious arguments and relevant facts to the contrary") and not contain information that the charity knows or ought to know is false, inaccurate, or misleading (Canada Revenue Agency 2003). The expectation that "facts to the contrary" be presented may be somewhat problematic, since there is no such expectation facing any other party that speaks with government, such as industry.

Dolecki (2009) also sees the subsection as a hindrance to effective civil society. "It provides a means that the government can use to discipline charities. If the advocacy work is not significant it [government] doesn't do anything. But as soon as you get into a situation where you're effective, you get in trouble. In the case of charities, they are on a short leash," he says. He comments that this dependency on funding makes registered charities so "vulnerable" that they lose a degree of effectiveness. As a result, he often prefers to work outside of the registered charity system, and fund his work out of his own pocket. For example, he spent $40,000 fighting the Rafferty-Alameda project in 1989.[134] He feels that subsection 149.1 shackles charities in their abilities. Under their limits, his efforts would be less effective.

Quite a few registered charities said that the regulation had no effect on their activities, as their organizations had no desire to carry out advocacy work (Anonymous 3 2009; Brandon 2009; Kopelow 2009; Lindsey 2009; Pelletier 2009; Phare 2009; Venema 2009). While the group that Anonymous 3 (2009) represents has been cited in the media at times, it attempts to be politically neutral. However, he expected the "10% rule" could stop other charities from being as "outspoken" as they would like to be, and questioned the appropriateness of the limitation. The IISD is also not greatly affected by the regulation, as it is "non-advocacy." Venema (2009) states the Institute will do advocacy and outreach related to its research, and its activities have never been questioned by Revenue Canada.

Even though they do not perceive the Manitoba Water Caucus as limited by the spending regulation, as the Caucus is an "umbrella" non-advocacy group, Brandon and Kopelow both feel it is an unfair impediment for many other charities. Says Kopelow:

> It represents a great intellectual loss, that these voices aren't recognized and allowed to speak. Why is there a need for advocacy in the first place? It's because these people, who are often very well-educated, well-trained and very perceptive, have recognized a need for a voice on that particular issue. Their voices are limited, and that's a big loss…ENGO's [environmental non-governmental organizations] really need more free-range in expressing their views because I don't think that a controversial view is a bad thing. I think it improves the state of democracy when there is open dialogue. Putting that restriction on them really slants the dialogue in a way that's not beneficial to anyone.

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[134] The Rafferty-Alameda project involved the construction of dams on the Souris River in Saskatchewan. Dolecki and several other opponents, including the Canadian Wildlife Federation, challenged the construction of the dams, charging that the government had not complied with Environmental Assessment Review Project guidelines. The Federal Court of Appeal agreed with the opponents, but the dam was still built once a new licence was issued (Dolecki 2009; Hessing, Howlett and Summerville 2005).

Brandon (2009) also suggests that charities are disadvantaged compared to other stakeholders in democracy, such as business and industry. "If you look at the organizations that speak on behalf on industry, they're able to fund themselves year-long…because of the funding structure of business…So, I would recommend that you try to create a level playing field between industry advocacy and citizen advocacy."

Burns (2009) says it does not affect her in her work with the Foundations in the Lake Winnipeg Watershed Initiative, but she knows it affects other organizations. She says some registered charities appear to be cowed by the regulation. "I'm afraid that it does probably affect the thinking and the actions of a fair number of NGOs [non-governmental organizations]…I am always trying to reassure other organizations that I don't think we should let this fear stop us from really trying to get a message out there." She also suggests that some organizations might be choosing not to develop media expertise, partially in response to fear of the regulation. "I think they use it as a bit of an excuse." During her time as the director of the Winnipeg Humane Society, another charity, and one that is frequently in the news media, somebody complained about the Society's public opposition to the spring bear hunt. The Humane Society has been quite vocal on a number of animal rights issues, such as hunting and, related to Lake Winnipeg, the living conditions of hog sows. When Revenue Canada reviewed the Humane Society's activities, it did not find they exceeded the 10% rule. Nevertheless, she disagrees with the regulation. "Personally, I think there's something amiss with this if political parties are allowed to give a tax receipt, and a *much larger* tax receipt, and it's obviously all about lobbying. Why are we trying to silence charities?"

So strong is the belief in some groups that charitable status is a detriment that there are also groups who choose not to pursue this status partially because it would affect their ability to advocate. The Concerned Daly Ratepayers, Hog Watch, Citizens for the Responsible Application of Phosphorus, Save Our Lake and the group that interviewee Anonymous 1 represents, all have not pursued charitable status (Dolecki 2009; Pryzner 2009; Tipples 2009). These groups are still considered "non-profit groups," but do not receive the benefits of charities, such as the ability to apply for many grants (some grants are available only to organizations that have a charitable status number), the ability to issue tax receipts to donors and the legitimacy attached to being a registered charity. Pryzner (2009) says these groups are much lower on resources, as a result. However, advocacy to change phosphorus application laws is one of the main activities of one of

the groups in which she is involved, Citizens for the Responsible Application of Phosphorus. For this group, acquiring charity status is an impossibility, for it would mean they would have to entirely alter their goals. Clubb (2009) calls the lack of funds for advocacy groups "a gap across the country." She says it is such a significant problem that there was a recent attempt in Manitoba to create a foundation "strictly to fund advocacy." However, this initiative has not moved forward.

5.8.4 Lack of resources as a limitation to media engagement

When interview respondents were asked to speculate about why civil society organizations sometimes do not permeate and define media coverage as extensively as other actors, many answered that lack of resources was a key reason. Of the organizations interviewed for this thesis, only two had dedicated communications personnel: Ducks Unlimited Canada and the IISD. Each of these organizations employs a person specifically for this activity. Many of the other organizations stated that they do not have the funding to hire a communications person, and recognize that creating such a position could enhance their outreach abilities (Anonymous 2 2009; Anonymous 1 2009; Brandon 2009; Clubb 2009; Phare 2009).

Part of the problem appears to be that civil society organizations are most often funded by grants, and these grants generally fund specific projects, not core operations including media activities. While media activities may occasionally be part of a project, they are rarely the focus. Anonymous 1 (2009) says it is very hard to find funding for these sorts of activities.

Another interviewee from a fairly large civil society organization also believes his group could benefit from having more media ability. He recognizes that his group does not communicate to the public all of the information it feels it should. "With the communications capabilities that we have, we try to get this information out to everyone as best we can. But I'll be honest with you in saying that we don't have a well-oiled communications infrastructure …We're trying to get the right message out as best we can" (Anonymous 3 2009).

Many of the respondents perceived unfairness in the ability of civil society organizations and that of industry and government to carry out communications. Several respondents commented on the large amount of money that the Manitoba Pork Council puts into public relations and advertising, something that non-governmental organizations are rarely able to do (Anonymous 2 2009; Burns 2009; Clubb 2009; Phare 2009). Pryzner (2009) says that one civil

society group in which she was involved wanted to place a full-page advertisement in the *Free Press* in order to raise awareness of regulatory changes being made, but the group could not afford the cost. As section 6.3 describes, the Manitoba Pork Council has placed advertisements in this and other publications to further its interests. Says Clubb: "We don't have that. We can't get money for advocacy, but the Pork Council can." She calls this situation one of the "inherent structural economic barriers for public use of papers."

Ducks Unlimited Canada is one of the few organizations consulted for this research that does have media capacity. Bruce (2009) explains that it is beneficial to the organization to have dedicated media personnel to communicate scientific information in a media-friendly way. Ducks Unlimited Canada recognizes that it is fortunate to have media staff. "A lot of non-governmental organizations don't have the capacity that we do in that regard."

5.8.5 Current action to create a Lake Winnipeg advocacy group

The imbalance between advocacy and non-advocacy groups is so great in Manitoba that there is currently a plan underway to create, at long last, a well-funded advocacy group for Lake Winnipeg, independent of government funds. Burns (2009) and several other environmentalists are working on creating a group to join the Waterkeeper Alliance, a movement founded by Robert F. Kennedy Junior in the United States that now consists of almost 200 groups worldwide, each acting for a different water body. Seven Waterkeeper Alliance groups already exist in Canada, though none is on the prairies.[135] Explains Burns: "The idea would be to, first of all, develop an organization whose focus is absolutely advocating for Lake Winnipeg." Those interested in the group have already met with representatives from the Alliance. She hopes the group will be realized in the near future. The American Waterkeeper Alliance web site explains that communication through the media is an important part of the Alliance's activities (Waterkeeper Alliance n.d.).

Other interview participants were aware of this movement, and are optimistic about its potential (Anonymous 1 2009; Phare 2009). "I think the Lake Winnipeg Waterkeeper will fill the void that exists…[it] would put more pressure on our government to be swifter on what they say they want to do," says Anonymous 1 (2009).

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[135] There are Waterkeeper Alliance groups in Ontario, New Brunswick, British Columbia and Labrador. For more information on the Waterkeeper Alliance in Canada, see http://www.waterkeepers.ca/local.html.

Joining an established network of groups may be one of the best solutions for the lack of advocacy for water in Manitoba. The existing advocacy groups, such as Citizens for the Responsible Application of Phosphorus, do not have the benefit of the credibility that already exists with the Waterkeeper name. Therefore, it is much more difficult for these grassroots advocacy groups to acquire significant funding, or to be seen as legitimate by the media, the public and politicians.

Other attempts have been made to fund advocacy, to little avail. Clubb (2009) was involved with an attempt in recent years to create a foundation to fund advocacy activities, the Manitoba Foundation for the Environment, but due to disagreements about how the foundation would be funded and several private reasons, progress to create the group halted.

5.9 Non-media activities for governance

As the above sections indicate, news media attention is not a primary goal of many of the organizations with an interest in Lake Winnipeg water quality. Therefore, the activities that they *do* focus on need to be highlighted in order to put their media activities into context.

All of the organizations participated in activities that did not centre on the news media. Many of these activities also encouraged good governance. Non-media activities used by the respondents include building capacity through face-to-face work within communities, giving presentations, hosting public forums, holding public events, attending trade shows and conferences, putting up posters, producing pamphlets and fact sheets, speaking at schools and universities, meeting with government officials, meeting with business leaders and participating in public consultations, such as Manitoba Clean Environment Commission hearings. These activities sometimes garner media attention, but media coverage is not the focus.

Several participants stressed the need to reach beyond the media. Said Lindsey (2009): "I think we shouldn't rely on the media. That's a mistake. If we think we can get what we want just through the media then we're wrong. We have to do many other things as well."

Similarly, Bruce (2009) explained:

> One of the most impactful things we did to get our research out over the last little while is just to specifically and directly go out and talk to people…you can put a message in the *Winnipeg Free Press* once, some people read it, and they move on to their busy days. But to touch people's lives, to change opinion and to motivate people, you need to do it over

a longer period of time in an integrated fashion…[the media] are important but we don't rely on [them] solely. I would argue…there's ways to achieve our goals without ever getting into the *Winnipeg Free Press*…If you want to get people educated, the media is one way to do it. But in many respects if you want to get people *motivated* that's often very difficult to do through the media. (emphasis added)

Many of the interviewees opined that they found their face-to-face work in communities to be perhaps the most effective at achieving change (Brandon 2009; Bruce 2009; Kopelow 2009; Tipples 2009). Tipples (2009) says that while her organization has received some coverage in the media, it has not been enough to achieve its goals of awareness and change. She says "we have been forced to take to our feet and the roads."

Numerous organizations also spend a great deal of time helping citizens obtain the skills and self-confidence to become engaged in the governance process (Anonymous 1 2009; Brandon 2009; Bruce 2009; Clubb 2009; Kopelow 2009; Lindsey 2009; Phare 2009). Many groups saw one of their major roles as capacity-building and empowerment. Kopelow (2009) describes her work at the Manitoba Water Caucus: "it's our job to gather people [in a community] together and help them work with a stronger voice."

Many of the civil society groups also see working with government and business as part of governance (Bruce 2009; Clubb 2009; Fefchak 2009; Kopelow 2009; Lindsey 2009; Phare 2009). To that end, they meet with governmental officials or business representatives. For instance, The Mixedwood Forest Association and International Erosion Control Association (Northern Chapter) have worked directly with loggers to reduce erosion (Clubb 2009).

Finally, a number of interview respondents participate in government consultations and hearings at various levels of government, as well as Manitoba Clean Environment Commission hearings (Anonymous 1 2009; Baron 2009; Clubb 2009; Dolecki 2009; Fefchak 2009; Pryzner 2009; G. Whelan-Enns 2009). This forum is meant to be a formal way in which civil society can participate in governance. While it is far outside the scope of this thesis to discuss the effectiveness of the Clean Environment Commission and whether or not it succeeds at including citizens in the process of governance, it should be noted that interview participants expressed considerable dissatisfaction about the process. Some respondents expressed that the media are all the more important when such governance mechanisms are not adequate.

5.10 Summary

Section 5.2 of this chapter asks a question that is very pertinent to good governance: whose responsibility is it to get Lake Winnipeg topics into the news, and to ensure the public is adequately educated through whichever means (news media, public forums, brochures etc.) in order to make responsible decisions? This chapter has helped illustrate that the answer to this question is far from simple.

The interview data suggest that participants place the greatest onus on the news media to obtain the appropriate information. Interviewees proposed that Manitoba's news media could provide coverage that relies less on government voices and increases the presence of other voices (e.g. First Nations people, civil society groups). Their perspectives were often similar to those expressed in existing academic literature – that there is a problem with the existing structure of journalism (e.g. beat systems, corporate and political biases, reliance on news releases) that contributes to the dominance of "elite" sources in the news. Respondents also suggested that newspapers, specifically the *Winnipeg Free Press*, should reflect on how they choose Op-Ed pieces and letters to the editor, and consider whether or not current selection policies hinder some voices while promoting others.

Even though interviewees place the greatest onus on the media, this chapter has also pointed out that the process of journalists contacting civil society sources to get their perspectives is not always simple. Some civil society groups are hesitant to talk due to inexperience and fear of the media, or may be constrained by concerns of losing funding or charity statuses. Most civil society organizations also do not have staff dedicated to communications activities. Indeed, many interviewees readily admitted that there are weaknesses within civil society that decrease its presence in the media. Furthermore, they placed considerable responsibility for educating citizens for good governance on civil society organizations themselves. Civil society weaknesses noted by interviewees included under-developed media skills in some organizations, lack of resources to develop media skills and a tendency to rely more on non-media activities. One key finding was that there is a recognized need for a water advocacy group in Manitoba, one not constrained by the *Income Tax Act* or by other funding concerns. It was suggested that such a group would address some of the weaknesses that currently exist in providing a strong civil society voice in the media.

Despite these problems, many of the organizations already use public relations tools such as news releases, news conferences, and personal interactions with media personnel to attempt to influence the news agenda. Therefore, some capacity for media outreach already exists. However, interviewees commented that media uptake of their perspectives has not always been strong. Some interviewees felt more optimistic about their organizations' potential to reach the public through smaller newspapers, such as weekly community newspapers and agricultural newspapers. Respondents who wrote letters to the editor reported that they had higher success rates being printed in these publications, and that they were able to express more complex views in them, since longer letters are allowed. That said, a number of interviewees stressed that it is still important to access Winnipeg's largest daily newspaper, since it has a much larger readership than any other publication.

There was also an evident trend towards organizations creating their own news media, rather than relying on existing newspapers, radio and television. There were many examples of "civil society-created" media in both hard copy and electronic forms.

Finally, some responsibility was placed on the three levels of government to help provide adequate information for good governance. Of particular note, federal *Income Tax Act* restrictions on charities may be limiting the voices of some civil society organizations in the news media. The implications of this chapter's findings, and how they relate to findings in the literature review and content analysis of this thesis will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 6: Discussion

6.1 Implications for governance of civil society access to the *Winnipeg Free Press*

The findings from chapters 3, 4 and 5 all point towards an overall conclusion that different types of sources have different degrees of access to the different article types in the *Winnipeg Free Press*. Civil society, the source category of interest in this thesis, has varying degrees of access to the "hard" news section, to Op-Eds and to letters to the editor, but is generally disadvantaged.

"Traditional" sources, particularly government, business and scientists, have been shown by past academic studies to dominate "hard" news. This finding was also borne out in the content analysis of articles in the *Winnipeg Free Press* on the topic of Lake Winnipeg nutrient loading, particularly through the dominance of government sources, at 47.4%. Civil society organizations, while representing 13.1% of sources, were found to be placed less prominently in news articles, be more likely to be the last source in news articles, and be less likely to be a defining source on the first page, the most prominent page of a newspaper.

The high reliance in "hard" news on government sources as both defining and responding sources, and lower reliance on civil society sources have implications for governance and democracy. Lake Winnipeg nutrient loading is a multi-faceted topic, with virtually everyone in the watershed having a responsibility in the process towards mitigating a situation that has been developing for decades. With every citizen contributing to the problem, and the Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board even emphasizing this fact through the title of its report: *Our Common Responsibility*, it stands to reason that elected officials and governmental bureaucrats should not dominate the news on the watershed to the degree that they do. The media have a rich opportunity to access a spectrum of voices and opinions on the topics which, as chapter 2 outlined, include agricultural activities, wastewater and sewage, industry, household products (e.g. dishwasher detergents, cosmetic fertilizers), loss of wetlands, climate change, *E. coli* at beaches and cross-border disputes (e.g. Devils Lake Diversion, Garrison Diversion).

Civil society groups have actively organized on many of these topics and have perspectives that differ markedly from those of the government sources currently dominating coverage. Many of these groups can offer constructive criticism of governmental policies, bring forward new policy ideas not being discussed by the government, or discuss viewpoints that are not expressed by traditional sources (e.g. that of First Nations people on water quality), and yet

these voices are barely audible. In many cases of *Winnipeg Free Press* coverage, civil society voices are at best responding sources to governmental announcements or industry actions. As responding sources, they are placed later in news articles than defining sources, a placement that results in their views being less likely to be read. In addition, their views as responding sources are allocated less space than are defining sources; if length contributes to prominence, these shorter citations result in lower saliency of civil society sources.

Interviews with civil society sources indicate that some civil society groups do periodically attempt to access the "hard" news pages, but that many have difficulty achieving "defining source" status, or even being contacted as a responding source. However, as will be discussed in section 6.3, not all the fault necessarily lies with the newspaper, as limitations of civil society organizations may make them more difficult to access as sources or less likely to be recognized by journalists as a credible defining source.

Civil society proved to have somewhat higher successes at accessing Op-Eds and letters to the editor. Letters to the editor, in particular, proved to be the domain of unaffiliated citizens. To some degree, perhaps the higher inclusion of civil society voices in these areas counter-balanced the dominance of "elite" sources in "hard" news. For the most part, "elite" sources had less access to these sections of the newspaper (though the Manitoba Pork Council enjoyed unparalleled access to the letters to the editor section). That said, several comments can be made about the prominence and nature of Op-Eds that have implications for governance.

First, these pieces are placed later in the newspaper than are "hard" news pieces. While pages later in the newspaper certainly may still enjoy high readership, and some readers likely even pay more attention to Op-Eds than "hard news", later placement seems to suggest lower importance. In addition, since there appears to be a trend in our society towards shorter attention spans of individuals due to the overwhelming amount of information and entertainment available, it seems plausible that later pages could receive less attention from the average reader, whose attention may start to dwindle as he or she proceeds through the pages of a newspaper.

Second, it must be noted that not all civil society sources enjoy equal access to the Op-Eds. Many civil society groups find the Op-Ed page to be unattainable. While it would be unreasonable to suggest that newspapers allow each and every organization's work be published on this page, it is not unreasonable to suggest that organizations that can meet certain requirements should at least feel they have a chance to have their submissions printed there. Such

requirements could include the ability to produce pieces that are 1) well-written; 2) contain new information and fresh perspectives; 3) use credible information as a basis for discussion; and 4) address issues of public significance. It could be useful for newspapers to formally develop such criteria and make them available for any person or organization wishing to submit an Op-Ed.

Another noteworthy comment on Op-Ed pieces is that even those interview respondents who had pieces published reported that they had to use persuasion and persistence to push their writing into print. In the case of the IISD, the civil society group with the most Op-Eds published, it took diligence on the part of Institute's communications officer to bring the Op-Ed to print. Given that most organizations do not have dedicated communications employees, as will be discussed in section 6.3, this situation may be a barrier to some organizations accessing the Op-Ed pages.

That said, the value of Op-Eds must be recognized. Through such pieces, civil society organizations have managed to introduce ideas and perspectives to the public that were not necessarily in other sections of the newspapers. For instance, some Op-Ed pieces by civil society members commented on topics such as wetland loss and climate change, topics that were otherwise largely neglected by the news. One value of Op-Ed pieces over "hard" news pieces is that writers control the messages; while some editing may be done by the newspaper, civil society members who write Op-Ed pieces are essentially getting their perspectives to the public in their own words. This type of communication can rarely be done in 'hard' news pieces, unless perhaps a newspaper published a news release verbatim. The more persuasive and opinion-based styles of Op-Ed pieces, as opposed to the often more neutral style of "hard" news, can also be viewed as a possible benefit to having an Op-Ed published. One can imagine that the rhetorical writing style could solicit a stronger reaction, perhaps of agreement (or disagreement) from readers than an "objective" news piece. These reactions could, in turn, prompt readers to think about topics and discuss compelling Op-Eds with other citizens. If discussion occurs amongst citizens, public debate has been sparked and democracy may benefit. Of course, "hard" news can also spark debate, but the writing style of many Op-Eds could provoke stronger reactions.

The letters to the editor section was the most accessible section for citizens and civil society groups. Many interviewees had been published on these pages, and the content analysis reflected high civil society access. Just as persuasive writing styles in Op-Eds may spark reader reflection and discussion with other citizens, so too might a well-written, thought-provoking

letter to the editor result in reflection and discussion. In this way, letters to the editor are beneficial to governance and democracy.

However, there are notable drawbacks to a group accessing only this section and not *also* 'hard' news and Op-Eds. The brief nature of letters to the editor is a concern. The topic of Lake Winnipeg nutrient loading is complex, and it is hard to sum up any view in the few paragraphs allowed for any individual letter. It is also hard to build an argument, or provide supporting facts to make an argument persuasive. Since letters to the editor are expected to be short, there is an implication for governance. Letter writers may not be able to express their complete views and, as such, are not contributing as meaningfully to public debate. It is troubling that letters to the editor appear to be one of the key ways in which civil society organizations and citizens access the newspaper, since even the most concise writer may not be able to express a complex thought in 300 words or less. Many civil society organizations have a remarkable depth of knowledge that rivals (and likely sometimes surpasses) that of some governmental officials, business interests and other actors. However, if their perspectives are relegated to letters to the editor more often than the views of other societal sources, their knowledge is not given the same credence. It will be less salient to society and, therefore, will influence public debate less.

One interview respondent conducted a deliberate experiment, and submitted a one-sentence letter to the *Winnipeg Free Press* to see if it would be published. Indeed, it was (Dolecki 2006). While perhaps the sarcastic nature of the letter was one reason it was chosen, he and other interviewees who write letters feel that the *Winnipeg Free Press* is sometimes less concerned with the content of letters submitted, and more concerned with their length and, perhaps more notably, whether or not it agrees with the newspaper's editorial slant. Several interviewees who have written letters criticizing the hog industry opined that the newspaper is supportive of the hog industry and of the provincial government, particularly before the hog industry became less profitable in recent years due to market factors.

One interviewee also reported that a *Winnipeg Free Press* editor told her that the newspaper looks for letters featuring opinions more so than facts (though opinions *and* facts are acceptable). Therefore, civil society members with facts to communicate about Lake Winnipeg water quality may have a lesser likelihood of having their letters published if they do not include opinion. However, opinion-based writing may be taken less seriously by the target audience.

Most readers can distinguish between opinion and fact, and are likely to attribute more credibility to the latter.

Finally, one comment can be made about the role of the letters to the editor section as a potential forum for public debate. In several instances, a debate began in the letters to the editor section, with one person writing in to respond to a previously published letter. Governance theory suggests that the exchange of differing views is often a positive thing. However, the debate between letter writers was truncated by the newspaper, as each writer was only allowed to have one letter published. While, in many cases, it may be appropriate to publish each writer only once, this approach may not always best serve good governance in matters of such strong public interest as Lake Winnipeg water quality. Sometimes valuable information or clarifications could be provided by allowing further letters between writers. It could be valuable for the *Winnipeg Free Press* to evaluate its potential role in furthering public understanding and debate of important issues, and perhaps choose sometimes to allow debates to continue on its letter to the editor page or to be elevated to the Op-Ed page.

6.2 Civil society and a trend towards non-traditional news production

This study also illustrated that civil society with an interest in Lake Winnipeg water quality has recognized it has limited access to the province's largest daily newspaper and, as such, some organizations have focused significant attention on smaller publications, such as weekly newspapers. In addition, there appears to be an increasing trend towards self-publication, be it online or through self-printed mini-newspapers. Some organizations are also experimenting with online opportunities for information provision, such as blogs.

The implications of civil society usage of smaller or alternative news publications are multiple. The value of weekly or alternative newspapers to good governance may be increased, if they are a better vehicle for alternative voices. This thesis did not include a literature review or content analysis of weekly newspapers, so definitive conclusions can not be made, but the role of weekly newspapers in civil society communications may be a useful area of future study.

The pattern of civil society seeking its own means to communicate with the public through such forms as self-published materials and online information is also of consequence. In particular, this finding suggests that daily newspapers may be becoming less relevant to democracy and good governance. If civil society is viewing daily newspapers as beholden to the

government and business and, therefore, is seeking to communicate its views through alternative vehicles, the value to governance of newspaper journalism could be diminished through an even smaller diversity of voices, particularly if civil society is becoming less interested in mainstream news inclusion. At some point, readers could recognize and question the lack of non-traditional voices in the news media, question the value of mainstream news, and turn to alternative sources of news information, such as online blogs. There are already suggestions in academic studies that citizens are increasingly relying on blogs for news information and that blogs have the potential to contribute meaningfully to democracy (Koop & Jansen 2009; Meraz 2009; Reese et al 2007; Woodly 2008), but it is outside the scope of this study to speculate how much civil society organizations could successfully communicate through such new forms of media. If new and alternative forms of media prove to be vehicles upon which the public seizes, the already financially troubled newspaper industry may be further afflicted. Ironically, by providing civil society with a limited voice in their pages, daily newspapers may be driving civil society to alternative media. If these alternative forms are seized upon by the public, civil society may have their voices better heard, but daily newspapers may have their condition further weakened.

6.3 Internal and external factors restricting civil society inclusion in news media

One particularly notable finding in this study is that, despite the more than decade-old discussion over Lake Winnipeg's health, there is no strong water advocacy organization in Manitoba. Advocacy groups have formed on specific topics – for instance, the now almost inactive group Hog Watch Manitoba pushed for restrictions on the hog industry and improved living conditions for animals – but no group has tackled the "big picture" of water quality and the myriad of nutrient sources. Some non-advocacy groups, such as the Manitoba Water Caucus, may take a "big picture" approach, but the fact remains that it is politically neutral (though its smaller member groups are welcome to take positions). No group has taken up a mission to lobby for strong water policies, to pressure government to make strong water protection laws or to be vocal in the news media on the topic of water quality. Rather, most civil society groups with an interest in water quality are either charities which, by legal definition, are restricted in their advocacy abilities, or groups that have not chosen to have advocacy as a main part of their mandate. Existing groups focus on such activities as community capacity building, face-to-face community interactions, working with specific populations (e.g. First Nations, specific

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industries), conducting research, acting as non-advocacy liaisons between smaller organizations, public education (through non-media and non-advocacy means), addressing specific local problems (e.g. specific, single industrial development proposals) and serving as non-advocacy consultants. These are all necessary and worthy activities that can contribute to good governance and participatory democracy. However, numerous interviewees commented that the gap in advocacy is a major concern, and may leave the news media with a lesser ability to access frank, informed and unrestricted comments from civil society.

The research showed that there are factors both from within civil society that appear to limit its advocacy functions, as well as external factors. One of the internal factors was that most civil society groups do not have communications staff, and have not always invested in basic communications training for existing staff. Only two organizations consulted had dedicated communications personnel, the IISD and Ducks Unlimited Canada. The data suggest that the communications expertise increased the prominence of these organizations in the news. For instance, these communications personnel regularly write media outreach materials and maintain contact with news organizations to get their organization's information into the publications. The low frequency of communications personnel appears to be partially a result of funding and priorities. It is difficult for an organization to acquire funds for a communications staff person, as activities are usually grant-funded on a project-by-project basis, not for overall organizational activities, which is what communications often is.

This lack of communications staff also raised a second issue: lack of communications plans. Existing literature on successful communications suggests that communications plans, with expressed targets and objectives, are key to maximizing the success of initiatives. However, it appears that media communication done by many of the organizations did not stem from such communications plans, but were most often done by carrying out communications activities as the need arose. Again, the only two organizations with clear communications plans were the IISD and Ducks Unlimited Canada – the same two organizations that have dedicated communications personnel. Other groups did not seem to have articulated point-by-point plans, though sometimes plans of a more informal nature existed. Reimer (2009) stressed the importance of the plan to her work, suggesting it is one of the most important things for an organization carrying out public education to have. The IISD has a document available to its staff on tactics of "how to move your knowledge into the hands of the people you seek to influence."

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Essentially, it is a guidebook of how to create a communications plan (Creech 2006). The document says: "A communications plan should be developed for every research project from the very beginning – at the project design stage, prior to the securing of funding – rather than at the end of the project" (3). The Institute was in the process of developing a communications plan for its new Water Innovation Centre while this thesis was being researched. Literature suggests that the Institute is doing what is necessary to improve its chances of reaching its publics, through the news media and other means. Other organizations studied were not so organized and, as such, may be less successful.

Perhaps it must be accepted that not all organizations will be able to hire dedicated communications personnel. However, it is entirely possible that every organization can have one or more staff members with communications training. For instance, staff can be trained on how to write and disseminate professional media materials. It was apparent that not all organizations were aware of how to write a standard news release. If a news release is not presented in the expected manner, the story it proposes may be considerably less likely to be picked up by the news media because journalists may see it as less credible.[136] In addition, it often takes less time for journalists to create a story based on information in a news release, as news releases already have structures similar to news stories (e.g. leads, source quotations, short paragraphs). It is possible that something as simple as professional-looking news releases could affect an organization's prominence in the news media. Fortunately, the news release format is quite basic and easy to learn. It is promising that the Manitoba Eco-Network conducts occasional workshops (approximately one every two years) to train its members in basic media skills. Such a resource could contribute significantly to civil society skills in media outreach, and should be encouraged. It is also promising that a few organizations have sought out their own media skills training (e.g. the Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources). However, the fact remains that most of the organizations studied do not appear to have conducted skills training in this area.

The minor focus on communications by most organizations also suggests that the organizations may be less accessible to the news media. An organization with dedicated communications personnel has the ability to provide information to journalists quickly. For instance, government, the dominant source in the content analysis, generally has media personnel for each department. This difference in structure between government and civil society could be

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[136] The author is basing this statement on her own personal experiences with and knowledge of journalism.

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a significant reason why government is able to both define news more often and be a responding source more frequently. Government seems to view communications activities as one of its necessary functions, unlike most of the organizations studied. If a journalist cannot reach a source quickly, the source will be excluded. Deadlines are unavoidable.

This lack of communications training also brought to light a further finding: that some organizations are simply intimidated by the news media. "Fear" of the media may be one reason why some organizations have low prominence in the news. Again, communications training of one or more staff members could remedy this problem and increase the public presence of organizations.

The research also explored external factors limiting civil society inclusion in media. In particular, the effects of the *Income Tax Act* on registered charities was found to be an impediment to civil society outreach to the news media.[137] There has been little study of how the federal regulation affects media communications activities, specifically. This research suggested that the *Act* may have significant effects on some organizations. Only a few groups consulted explicitly admitted that the *Income Tax Act* restricted their communications activities, saying that they must soft pedal their messages in the media in order not to risk their charity status. Most of the registered charities said they were not particularly affected by the *Act*. One consideration that should be brought up, however, is whether or not the structures and goals of some charities were affected at inception due to the *Act*. When a charity is formed, it creates missions and goals, statements that imply the types of activities the charity will undertake. Is it possible that these missions and goals are tailored to adapt to the *Income Tax Act*, directing the charities to carry out less advocacy-oriented activities than they might be if the *Act* did not exist? Would their nature have been different had the law restricting "political activities" not existed? A study of nascent charities would perhaps be necessary to answer this question. This analysis can only suggest this as a possibility.

The vague nature of the law, even after 2002 clarifications on the *Act*, should also be noted. For instance, the law allows for charities to "inform" public opinion but considers

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[137] It should be noted that while this chapter dwells considerably on the implications of the *Income Tax Act*, the significant amount of space given to this topic should not be taken as an indication that this finding is more important than other findings. Rather, more space was necessary due to the complex nature of the topic.

attempts to "sway public opinion on social [or environmental] issues"[138] as political (Canada Revenue Agency n.d.). The difference between "informing" and "swaying" is quite subjective, and the imprecise nature of the *Act* could make some charities apprehensive about making attempts to communicate any information on an environmental issue that could be construed as remotely "political." Figure 6.1 interprets how the *Income Tax Act* may alter the ability of registered charities to communicate with the news media and the public. Figure 6.2 suggests how charities could interact with the media without these restrictions to encourage better governance and a more informed citizenry.

A hypothetical illustration can also be created about the rule. This thesis has mentioned numerous times a communication campaign by the Manitoba Pork Council which included a two-page colour advertisement in the *Winnipeg Free Press*. It is possible to calculate that it would be virtually impossible for a charity to counterbalance the Pork Council's campaign with its own campaign of equal scope. For instance, assuming a charity had $75,000 in revenues, it would be allowed to dedicate 15%[139] of its resources, or $11,250, to political activities (e.g. a communications campaign). A two-page colour advertisement in the *Winnipeg Free Press* would cost this charity more than $39,000, already placing the charity at 3.5 times its legally allowed budget.[140] The actual cost of the advertisement to the organization would be higher if it hired a graphic design artist first to create the advertisement. In addition, the organization might hire a communications professional to carry out the media campaign (news releases etc.), unless it had a person with the applicable skills on staff. Notably, the Manitoba Pork Council has a Senior Communications Coordinator (Manitoba Pork Council 2009). Finally, for the campaign to be on par with that carried out by the Manitoba Pork Council, it would also place advertisements in weekly newspapers, at considerable cost. The consequences of this disparity on good governance is discussed at the end of this section. The fact that some groups chose not to pursue charity status because it would not allow them to advocate is also worth discussing. These groups

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[138] This wording is not from the official *Income Tax Act* but from interpretations of the act provided on the Canada Revenue Agency website.

[139] Charities with revenues between $50,000 and $100,000 can use 15% of resources for political activities.

[140] This amount was determined using information from the *Winnipeg Free Press* advertising rate card (2009). The calculation assumes 3,010 agate lines per page, and an advertiser buying an advertisement at $4.22 per agate line. The resulting calculation for an advertisement without colour is 3,010 X $4.22 = $12,702.20 per page. Therefore, two black-and-white pages cost $25,404.40. The cost to add four-colour process is an additional 55%, amounting to $19.688.41 per page (or $39,376.82 for two pages). Other considerations may alter cost, such as requesting position guarantees (e.g. placement on pages A6 and A7).

Figure 6.1: Graphic Representation of Interactions with Existing Income Tax Act
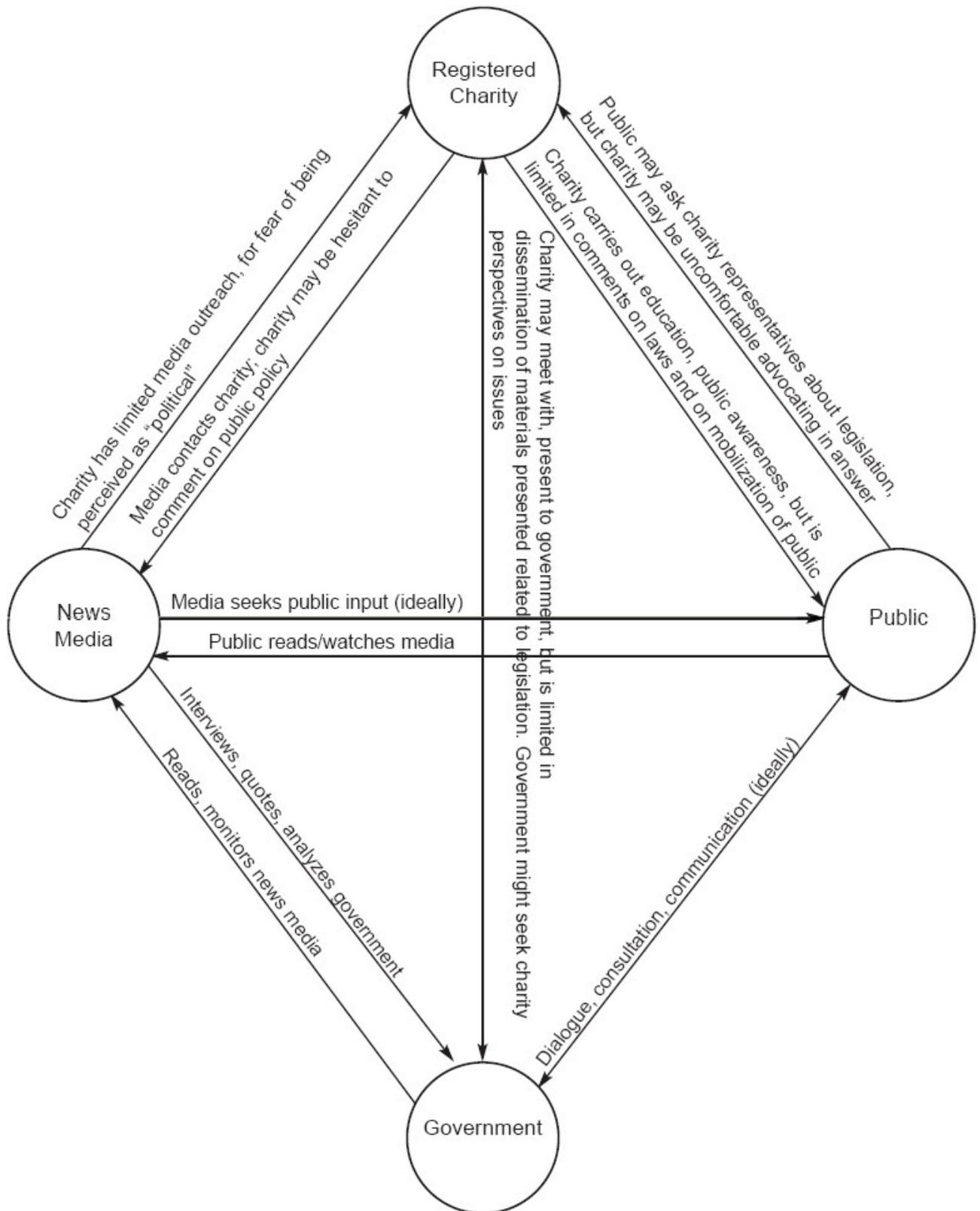
Figure 6.2: Graphic Representation of Interactions without Restrictions of Income Tax Act

- Registered Charity
- News Media
- Public
- Government

Charity carries out communications campaigns on policies related to its areas of expertise; is able to comment freely on political topics and policies

Media contacts charity; charity able to give frank and informed perspectives without fear of reprisals

Public asks charity representatives about legislation relevant to charity's area of expertise; charity free to comment

Charity unfettered in comments during education, public awareness activities; allowed to mobilize public

Charity meets with, presents to government, disseminates same information and materials to public without legal controls on how information must be presented. Government might seek out charity's perspectives on issues

Media seeks public input (ideally)

Public reads/watches media; receives more variety in voices since charities can comment on issues

Reads, monitors news media; learns more about charities' views, may be responsive to views expressed, particularly if they resonate with the public

Interviews, quotes, analyzes government charities' views

Dialogue, consultation, communication (ideally)

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generally had almost no resources, unlike charities that had access to grants and donations that were eligible for tax receipts (though many charities still had rather limited funds). The effects on non-charities' abilities to reach out to the media are an important consideration for governance. While these groups are legally free to carry out advocacy activities, their media outreach is likely to be hampered because they have no paid staff. The findings of this thesis suggest that if groups with stronger advocacy orientations were able to achieve charitable status, as they can in other countries, they would be better able to access the media and better able to contribute to discussions on the pages of newspapers. Arguably, groups that choose not to pursue charitable status would, likewise, be unable to undertake a communications campaign to respond effectively to those of bodies such as the Manitoba Pork Council, described above, since they are less able to access financial resources. The conundrum in Canada is that those groups that have more resources are usually also restrained by the *Income Tax Act* in what they can say on policy matters.[141] Therefore, there are few outspoken civil society organizations on policy matters.

The situation of non-charities that receive funding from governmental sources should also be mentioned. My research indicated that funding from such governmental sources has led to the funding government expecting the group to refrain from any activities that might reflect badly upon said government. While some interviewees suggested that such expectations are fair, the situation is not ideal for good governance. When government is the funder with public dollars, the recipient should perhaps have considerable freedom in how these funds are used, within reason. If the group's activities are constructive and result in public education and debate, it is not beneficial to good governance for the government to withdraw funding simply because the group was actually effective, managed to spark debate or garnered media coverage, and the results of its work happened to reflect badly on the government.

The paradox of government funding its own critics is obviously problematic. This research suggests the need for a solution, such as the creation of arms-length governmental bodies to fund advocacy-oriented civil society groups, or the creation of private foundations that provide funds *specifically* for advocacy (currently, most foundation grants are tied to a group having charitable status, which inherently means the money will not be used for political activities). In addition, a possible need for grants specifically to carry out communications

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[141] Exceptions do exist, most notably Greenpeace, which had its charity status revoked and, rather than trying to have its status reinstated, sought alternative forms of funding (Brandon 2009; Canada Revenue Agency 1998).

activities was indicated by research. Many interviewees indicated that, since work is funded on a project-by-project basis, there is rarely money available for substantial media outreach. The attempt by some civil society members to create a Lake Winnipeg Waterkeeper group could also help provide a stronger civil society voice in the news.

What this section details is a disparity in abilities of different interests to communicate via the media, with civil society less able to communicate due to financial restraints imposed by government and other funders. There are consequences to good governance due to this inequality. Industry, business and government are able to carry out communications activities without major restrictions. Charities, however, are severely limited in their legal ability to conduct media activities, and non-profits, while legally allowed to conduct communications campaigns, often do not have adequate resources to do so. It is not a far jump to suggest that this funding inequity could contribute to the lower prominence of civil society in the news media compared to better-funded interests. Civil society, which is arguably less likely to be self-serving[142] than governments or private sector organizations, is most limited in its ability to contribute to public debate. As a result, the public receives a skewed version of reality that emphasizes "elite" views. The ability of citizens to participate knowledgably in public affairs may be diminished by this distorted reportage. The situation for good governance is arguably worsened even further by the "self-imposed" restrictions on civil society outlined earlier in this section. The combination of communications and advocacy restrictions tied to funding, lack of communications training and staff, hesitancy towards dealing with the media and deliberate media avoidance all contribute to civil society as a whole having a much weaker voice on the topic of Lake Winnipeg than do other interests.

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[142] Governments are more likely to be self-serving because they hope to be re-elected (and perhaps receive election funding from certain sources), and business/industry organizations are more likely to be self-serving because they want to make a profit. Of course, there can be self-serving civil society groups or groups that do not act for the public good. The discussion of civil society in section 3.2.1 indicated that under some definitions of civil society, neo-Nazi groups or the Ku Klux Klan could be considered civil society, yet most people would feel that these groups do not act for any common good, Even if it is accepted that organizations not committed to democracy and the public good should not be included in "civil society", there is a grey zone. Climate change denying groups might also be motivated by self-interest, but claim to serve the public interest and consider themselves part of civil society. Overall, however, civil society groups are more focused on the "broader good," particularly social and environmental goods.

6.4 What's a newspaper to do?

The internal and external restrictions to civil society organizations being in the media lead to an interesting finding. A great deal of academic literature suggests that news media decisions and actions are predominantly the reason why "elite" sources dominate news. While the selection of sources by journalists is likely a significant factor in this pattern, this study suggests that, to some degree, this literature may be "blaming the messenger." The news media are contacted (through news releases, etc.) much more frequently by "elite" sources than by civil society and, as such, the newspaper is "the messenger" for the sources that feed it news (there is, of course, much debate about the appropriateness of media reliance on public relations, but that discussion is outside the scope of this thesis). The *Winnipeg Free Press* could be a more prominent "messenger" for civil society voices if civil society organizations actively engaged the media, but this research suggests that this is not the case with most organizations.

Literature suggests that civil society engagement of the media through such means as news releases and conferences would increase civil society prominence as "defining sources." While certainly critiques can and should be made of journalists' reliance on "easy" public relations information from traditional sources, the reality in which journalism operates should be recognized. Journalists are on tight deadlines, and for many stories they will use news releases, personal contacts or other "easy" paths to fill their allotted space in newspaper. While ideally journalists would be constantly doing investigative journalism, and seeking out the untold stories, it is naïve to expect them to do so on an everyday basis. Unfortunately for democracy, the mass media are tied into the marketplace and it may be utopian thinking to expect them not to place profits as a primary consideration. If the use of news releases and news conference materials more quickly fills the news hole and, as a result, fewer staff are needed, newspapers will most likely continue to use these information subsidies. For civil society to be more prominently included in the news, it is more logical for organizations to become skilled at communications, and to more aggressively seek out news coverage. In this way, they can work within the existing system of news coverage (though some changes in journalism practices can concurrently be encouraged, as discussed below). Therefore, a recommendation made in the above section can be repeated: civil society organizations should increase their communications capacities to improve their prominence in the news.

While the research for this study did not include interviews with journalists about their abilities to access civil society organizations, it can be inferred from findings that journalists might have difficulty accessing some "non-traditional" sources. Many organizations are hesitant to provide comments to the news media. While some of these organizations have valid reasons to limit comments (e.g. they are umbrella organizations representing members; they are limited by the *Income Tax Act* etc.), it seems unfair to place all the blame on the media for news coverage biased in favour of government when civil society is not prepared to participate in or incite discussion (through news releases) on the pages of the *Winnipeg Free Press.*

That said, journalists do need to be mindful of which sources are dominating coverage. They can counteract hesitancy on the part of civil society to be included and the lower information subsidies from civil society relative to those from elite sources. There are journalism methods that can decrease traditional source dominance. The practice of public journalism provides a good model for how the *Winnipeg Free Press* could revise its strategies to include civil society more prominently. In the case of Lake Winnipeg nutrient pollution, it might be necessary for journalists to cultivate trust with sources, since this research indicated apprehension on the parts of some civil society organizations to speak with the media. There are also some civil society groups that are more willing to speak with the media than others (e.g. Citizens for the Responsible Application of Phosphorus, Hog Watch Manitoba), but given that these groups have limited resources and do not have paid staff, the burden may be on the journalist to identify the most receptive groups.

Public journalism also recommends that journalists "get away from their desks" and from the offices provided to them by government (in the Manitoba legislature etc.), and to get out into the communities more. As noted above, journalists are still on deadlines, and perhaps cannot reasonably spend all their time combing the streets for non-traditional sources, but it is conceivable that in the multi-faceted case of Lake Winnipeg nutrient loading, the effort could unearth some valuable sources. Moreover, perspectives from civil society organizations can often be supplemented by contributions from individual citizens who have knowledge that would provide nuances to the nutrient loading debate. In agriculture, journalists could seek out hog farmers that *support* restrictions on the hog industry (many who do not own intensive livestock operations do). Concerning cosmetic fertilizers, journalists could seek out citizens who have transformed their yards from lawns to native prairie, which does not require fertilizers. There are

many non-traditional sources that journalists could access through networking and reflection on the issues at hand. These sources could be the "defining sources" for news articles, counter-balancing the articles that stem from news releases submitted to newspapers by government.

Many public journalism efforts have invited citizens into the news process even before articles are created. One approach that could be fruitful for Lake Winnipeg coverage would be for the *Winnipeg Free Press* to convene consultation panels with both civil society members and environmentally conscious citizens.[143] In this way, panel members could suggest story ideas and perspectives on issues. This approach would bypass the need for news releases, a situation that would be particularly fortunate for governance, given that individual citizens generally do not issue news releases (even if they have insights into issues), and civil society organizations rarely have communications personnel to craft outreach materials. Such a panel would provide the opportunity for increased civil society perspectives in the news without requiring participants to learn public relations skills. Truly, the high reliance of the news media on information subsidies puts some potential sources at a huge disadvantage, and is arguably detrimental to good governance.

Some public journalism endeavours have also deliberately focused on a specific topic, and linked articles on that topic throughout its pages and editions, for instance through the usage of a topic-specific logo or banner. In the United States, these projects have often been related to elections or social issues. The issue of Lake Winnipeg pollution provides a rich potential for such an approach. Rather than placing articles as discrete pieces in the newspaper, the *Winnipeg Free Press* could tie them together through visual indicators, and editors could attempt to ensure that good variety of "hard" news, investigative pieces, Op-Eds, editorials and letters to the editor are presented. Through such a conscious effort civil society voices could be more prominently featured in the newspaper, and readers could gain a more well-rounded and balanced understanding of the issue, thereby better enabling them to participate in democracy. Armed with this knowledge from the news, readers could conceivably choose to become more engaged in public debate, for instance by attending government consultations on nutrient loading issues (and hopefully demanding that the these consultations actually influence policy).

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[143] It would seem worthwhile to create a panel either specifically for Lake Winnipeg issues or, more broadly, for environmental issues.

Journalists could also consider Haas' "problem-solving model" (2007) for deciding when they should seek out non-traditional sources, and when it is appropriate to focus more on traditional sources. Haas suggests local problems deserve more citizen inclusion, while some broader issues on regional, national or international scales might necessitate a higher degree of elite source usage. To some degree, this model could be useful for the Lake Winnipeg situation. International issues such as the Devils Lake diversion, the Garrison Diversion and other cross-border issues do seem to oblige the use of official information, since much of the debate and decision-making occurs at the federal level. However, even in these stories, there are still many civil society organizations and affected citizens that could provide valuable insights. In addition, most stories have a local aspect (e.g. what effects could potential foreign organisms from the Devils Lake diversion have on Lake Winnipeg's ecosystem?). Indeed, journalists are often encouraged to find local slants to stories in order to make readers able to relate the story to their own lives (McMonagle 2003). This localization would invite a higher degree of citizen sources. Therefore, in the end, Haas's model is only of limited use; local responses to issues of regional, national and international scope are still relevant to public debate.

Finally, the findings of this thesis do support academic literature that suggests editors, editorial boards, publishers and political or corporate preferences of a news organization alter news coverage. Anecdotes provided by some interviewees for this thesis indicate that the *Winnipeg Free Press* sees itself as part of the corporate culture, and that its editors and publishers are hesitant to upset other corporations. This finding is telling and rather concerning for democracy. In essence, civil society groups have met with editorial boards, brought up credible concerns regarding water quality and the environment and heard the editorial boards admit that, while the groups' concerns might be newsworthy, it was not worth the risk to the newspaper's business or political relationships to cover the stories to the extent that the groups were encouraging. In light of public journalism literature, it would be worthwhile for the *Winnipeg Free Press*, and other news organizations, to reflect upon where their responsibilities lie: with other corporations and/or certain political affiliations, or with the general public?

Over all, the findings of this thesis indicate that the news media are not always publishing information that can best benefit good governance and society and that the oftentimes passive and non-advocacy structure of civil society contributes to gaps in news information. While this study focused on the *Winnipeg Free Press,* there are strong suggestions in academic literature

that this newspaper is one of many (or most) that are distracted from their potential to contribute to deliberative democracy. Chapter 7 will provide concluding remarks and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 7: Concluding Summary and Recommendations

7.1 Discovering *demos:* "Common people" in the news media

This research set out to explore how members of civil society were included or excluded in coverage of Lake Winnipeg nutrient loading in the *Winnipeg Free Press*. Guided by a review of the relevant literature the research proceeded on the assumption that substantial inclusion of such voices is a significant way[144] for society to enhance participatory democracy and good governance. The research was also designed to test findings by other academics that "elite" sources (e.g. government sources) tend to dominate news coverage. The concern explored by this thesis is that such a pattern could hinder good governance, if less traditional sources are not included in coverage, since good governance involves a wide network of actors, societal and governmental. A system of good governance enables a more participatory democracy in which citizens are encouraged to be involved. For good governance, news media can and should contribute not only by informing citizens, but also by giving citizens and the groups to which they belong a forum in which to voice their views and deliberate public policy.

Not only did this research explore the final product of the news media (i.e. news articles), but also it sought to illuminate aspects of the news creation process. To that end, this research explored the extent and nature of how civil society members with an interest in Lake Winnipeg water quality reached out to and engaged with the news media during the period of study.

The content analysis of this thesis demonstrated that "elite" sources dominated coverage of nutrient loading in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, a finding that supports prior research by other academics on source usage in news. While civil society sources were used in coverage of Lake Winnipeg nutrient loading, they were used less prominently (e.g. later in articles, were attributed fewer words, were less often "defining sources") and most often in pieces likely to be dismissed as mere opinion (e.g. letters to the editor). This pattern could be detrimental to good governance, since non-traditional sources often raise topics and issues that traditional sources (i.e. those who dominate coverage) might not recognize as an issue or may wish not to discuss for various

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[144] It should be stressed again that the news media are not the *only* way a society could conceivably obtain good governance. For instance, widespread usage of community meetings, public forums and other consultative and inclusive tools could contribute to good governance as much or *more* than the news media. However, this research restricted exploration to the potential role of the news media.

reasons (e.g. self-interest, economic impacts of addressing the issue etc.). Good governance requires the whole gamut of societal voices to be heard in news coverage, and for readers to have more or less equal chances of encountering each voice in the news. Favouring some voices over others may impair strong democracy. That said, some caveats are perhaps necessary on inclusion of *all* societal voices. For instance, it could be argued that views of groups that are socially offensive and immoral (e.g. Ku Klux Klan, neo-Nazi groups), or poorly reasoned/not based on science or logic (e.g. climate change denying groups) do not merit serious consideration. Here, journalists would have to use judgement as to which voices would contribute meaningfully to debate and societal improvement, and which voices could hinder the improvement of society.

This research also provided support for the finding in other academic literature that point to several factors within the news system that lead to elite source prevalence. Interview findings revealed that the *Winnipeg Free Press* considers itself part of the "corporate culture" in Manitoba and, as such, its editors are at times hesitant to be highly critical of industry. Calls by civil society groups for investigative and in-depth journalism into certain water quality and environmental concerns, particularly problems rooted in the hog industry, were largely ignored. Some interviewees also suggested that the *Winnipeg Free Press* has a partiality for the New Democratic Party; while this study did not attempt to research specific political news bias, there is considerable literature that does explore this area that provides evidence that political inclinations of news media do alter coverage.

Other factors within the news system which existing literature suggests influences news coverage include 1) the "beat system" of news, which focuses heavily on official institutions and, therefore, leads to elite source dominance, and; 2) common approaches to news coverage, such as adversarial framing that results in "bipolar coverage" that may misrepresent the situation.

Findings indicate a need for the news media to reflect on its purpose and responsibilities; most crucially, does it serve a particular interest (political or business), its own bottom line, or the public? As the discussion of public journalism in the literature review indicates, it is possible for the latter two responsibilities to be compatible within good governance.

Another significant contribution of this thesis is what it reveals about factors in civil society itself that appear to limit civil society inclusion in news media. Simply put, news media inclusion and/or influence were not significant goals of most of the organizations consulted. Factors uncovered in the extensive literature review and interviews include restrictions in the

abilities of charities to access the media due to the federal *Income Tax Act*, limitations due to fears about losing non-charitable sources of funding, limitations in reaching out successfully to media due to severely limited resources, limitations due to lack of preparedness and training to deal with the media, and an apparent choice by some members of civil society not to engage the media due to apprehension and/or doubts about the effectiveness of media. The significance of this finding is that a great deal of existing research attributes elite source dominance to choices made by journalists about whom to include as sources. However, this thesis indicates that civil society itself may have some shortcomings in dealing with the news media, and that these factors could also contribute to elite source dominance.

Moreover, this finding has considerable implications for good governance, which requires all relevant parties to speak up and participate. If civil society groups, particularly well-funded ones, are hesitant to have their voices heard and prefer to "work on the sidelines" and to be politically neutral, there may be no strong voice to raise certain issues of concern. There may be only fragmented, weaker voices speaking for civil society. The traditional "elite" sources then have a near carte blanche to put forward those topics they prefer, and minimize those they do not see as important or that might reflect badly on them. While several grassroots groups consulted for this thesis have advocacy stances, none of them was well-funded, and their members readily admitted their effectiveness and reach are limited.

The literature review of this thesis discussed the significance of civil society in governance and democracy, and stressed that since the news media are a key way in which people learn about issues, it is crucial that civil society voices be heard in the media. In many cases, civil society groups working on Lake Winnipeg water quality are not actively seeking news media coverage and, in doing so, may be doing a disservice to their own goals (in this case, improving the health of Lake Winnipeg).

This thesis also addressed gaps in academic literature regarding linkages between civil society, the news media and good governance. In particular, this thesis focused on interactions between civil society and the news media, an under-explored area of research. It also considered the importance and accessibility of different types of news pieces to civil society, and found that while letters to the editor were the most accessible, their brief nature, among other concerns, was problematic in their usefulness to public deliberation. The Op-Ed page and "hard" news articles had considerable value to good governance, but were harder for civil society to access. As a

result, civil society members indicated that they often felt they could not communicate effectively with the public via the *Winnipeg Free Press* and other news outlets, particularly the daily news media.

The findings suggest that one way in which civil society may be reacting to this low access to the daily news is by increasing efforts with smaller media or alternative forms of media. From weekly newspapers to online blogs, the research suggested that these non-traditional media may be supplanting the mainstream news media in importance, in terms of what vehicles civil society considers as effective in communicating with the public. The implications of this finding to the health of mainstream news media, particularly beleaguered daily newspapers, are largely negative.

Finally, the thesis provided recommendations for how civil society could overcome barriers, both external and self-imposed, to accessing the news media, as well as recommendations to newspapers for ways in which they could produce coverage that might lead to a more inclusive and deliberative medium, one that could make an increased contribution to good governance and participatory democracy (see Table 7.1). In particular, the conscious adoption of ideas from the public journalism movement could provide ways in which newspapers could elevate their contributions to democracy, public learning and public debate. In this way, they could better serve their responsibilities to society and merit the freedom given to them in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1982). The benefits could be twofold: newspapers could both increase their contribution to good governance and also increase their relevance (and fiscal security) in the competitive information environment of the 21st century.

7.2 Recommendations for future research

There are several paths for future research illuminated by this thesis. First, it would be valuable to study the internal and external restrictions to civil society involvement in other environmental issues, or in eutrophication debates in other watersheds, to document whether or not the situation in the Manitoban portion of the Lake Winnipeg watershed is paralleled elsewhere. The fairly low media outreach and involvement by many civil society organizations in this study, and an apparent preference for non-media activities, is likely to undermine

Table 7.1: Recommendations to civil society, news media, government and funders

Civil Society Groups	- Increase communications capacity and actively pursue news media coverage - Create communications plans - Hire communications staff (if financially possible) - Train existing staff in media skills (writing of news releases, being interviewed etc.) - Form a water advocacy group in Manitoba and/or the Lake Winnipeg watershed - Respond quickly to media requests for interviews and information - Learn what are and are not considered "political activities" for charities under the *Income Tax Act*
News Media	- Create and make publicly available clear guidelines and expectations for Op-Ed pieces and letters to the editor - Allow for debate on the letters to the editor and Op-Ed pages - Seek out non-traditional sources - Employ specific public journalism methods - Create civil society "beat" - Convene public consultation panels on topics such as water quality - Consciously increase inclusion of civil society voices in hard news - Use civil society more frequently as "defining sources" in hard news - Create a public journalism-style campaign on the topic of water quality and Lake Winnipeg, with linked articles and visual elements - Consider the effects any corporate or political preferences of a news agency might be having on the ability of coverage to contribute to the public good, democracy and governance
Federal Government	Review *Income Tax Act* and limitations it may place on charities' abilities to participate in democracy
Funders (Government and Private)	- Provide organizational funding for communications staff - Create an arms-length governmental body to make decisions on civil society group funding - Make funding more accessible to more advocacy-oriented groups - Form a private foundation that funds advocacy activities

prospects for the media's contribution to good governance; further study on the extent of this problem, and on promising responses, would be warranted.

Similarly, it would be useful for this research to be reproduced elsewhere with key variables changed; for instance, similar studies of environmental/watershed issues in which there are more advocacy groups (particularly well-funded ones), deeper conflicts, fewer interests, a less independent press or different laws around advocacy could be informative when compared to the findings in this thesis.

Second, it would also be valuable to interview journalists about their interactions with civil society. The perspective of journalists would help further clarify why elite sources continue to dominate news coverage, and why civil society sources have lower prominence. In particular, it would be useful to document whether or not journalists find civil society sources to be adequately accessible and eager to be consulted, as this thesis suggests they may be less so than "elite" sources.

Third, further studies of news media usage of information subsidies (news releases, etc.) from different types of sources would also be useful to indicate whether or not information subsidies from elite and non-elite sources are viewed and used by the news media in similar ways. Similarly, studies of total populations of letters submitted to newspapers on specific environmental and social issues from different categories of writers (e.g. citizen, politician, civil society organization, industry) as a ratio to actual letters published from these source categories could be informative regarding access to newspapers. Few such studies exist.

In addition, this research also suggested two additional potential categories of civil society. Civil society is a malleable term and can be broadened to include more actors than were recognized in this thesis. First, the degree to which journalists and newspaper columnists could be considered part of civil society would be a worthy topic of study. Particularly if journalists use public journalism techniques, they may be considered part of civil society for their conscious efforts in contributing to democratic debate. Columnists who opine on topics could be part of civil society due to the influence that they have via their columns. For instance, in the case of Lake Winnipeg, columnist Val Werier wrote subjective and award-winning pieces on the health of the lake throughout the 1990s and 2000s. Secondly, the degree to which scientists may be part of civil society needs clarification in the literature. They often carry out research for the public good and may advocate for certain causes. Some are affiliated with civil society organizations

and, as such, were classified as civil society during the content analysis of this thesis (e.g. the scientists of the Lake Winnipeg Research Consortium). However, other scientists work out of universities and are not directly affiliated with civil society. For instance, in the case of Lake Winnipeg, University of Winnipeg scientist, Eva Pip, is very vocal in the news media, particularly in her criticism of intensive farming and industry, and has advocated for tighter regulations at public hearings. However, as she is not affiliated with a civil society organization, she was coded as a scientist in this thesis's content analysis.[145] Scientists were considered "elite" and "traditional" sources in this study, but in there is evidently some overlap between the category "scientist" and that of "civil society member."

Fifth, the effects of the *Income Tax Law* on charity engagement with the news media, as well as involvement in participatory democracy in general, warrants further study. In particular, I observed in Chapter 6 that this law may affect the missions and goals of civil society organizations at their inception and that a study of new charities in the process of forming their missions could be valuable in determining how significant the restrictions on political activities are in determining organizational values.

Sixth, studies of civil society access to smaller newspapers, such as weeklies, university newspapers and alternative newspapers would allow a comparison to civil society's fairly low prominence in major daily newspapers. Data from this study indicated that civil society may have higher access to smaller publications, but few empirical studies exist. The potential contributions of these smaller publications to good governance should also be considered in such a study, with some consideration of how readers perceive credibility of information in these mediums compared to that in mainstream and daily news.

It is the basis of this thesis that good governance includes a wide array of actors. Any limitations placed on full and open participation by any one of the actors, including participation in the news media, are detrimental to the cause, in this case, the health of Lake Winnipeg.

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[145] The coding protocol initially attempted to code for scientists that could be considered part of civil society, and included scientists such as Pip as scientist-civil society "hybrids," but the differentiation between "regular" scientists and "hybrid" scientists proved difficult and so the effort was abandoned.

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Interview List

Anonymous 1. (2009, July 6). In-person interview.

Anonymous 2. (2009, Aug. 20). In-person interview.

Anonymous 3. (2009, Oct. 5). Telephone interview.

Baron, A. (2009, Sept. 19). Telephone interview.

Brandon, J. (2009, July 14). In-person interview.

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Fefchak, J. (2009, Sept. 17). Telephone interview.

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Pelletier, N. (2009, July 17). In-person interview.

Phare, M. (2009, Aug. 7). In-person interview.

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Content analysis protocol for Lake Winnipeg water quality coverage, *Winnipeg Free Press,* **1991-2008**

Introduction

This newspaper coding protocol is aimed at assessing the types of sources used in *Winnipeg Free Press* coverage of Lake Winnipeg water quality and the ways in which they are used, the main topics focused on in stories and the types of articles written.

Of particular interest is how civil society, as defined in the below definitions, is used in journalism coverage. This research stems from the hypothesis that such civil society actors are often not adequately consulted compared to traditional "elite" sources, such as governmental ones, and the concern that inadequate consultation hinders governance. In this thesis, good governance involves a wide network of actors, societal and governmental. A system of good governance enables a more participatory democracy in which citizens are encouraged to be involved. News media, for good governance, contribute not only by informing citizens, but also by giving citizens and the groups to which they belong a forum in which to voice their views and debate public policy.

Coders should familiarize themselves with the definitions below, as each comes up in the course of the content analysis and should be well-grasped in order for proper variable categorization.

Definitions

Source
"A source is a person, or organization, who gives information to news reporters…Sources are explicitly identified as such when news reporters quote or paraphrase information from them in stories" (Riffe, Lacy and Fico 2005, 131). For the purposes of this analysis, reports prepared by organizations or governments are also considered sources if they are explicitly cited. The source in these cases is the department or government from which the document came.

Civil society
Civil society includes voluntary, advocacy, non-governmental, non-profit or community organizations. It also includes individuals actively involved in "change work." Writes Van Rooy (1998): "Most often, these groups are circumscribed by a definition that excludes those belonging to the marketplace and the State…and by according them a positive moral mandate. Most definitions further specify that civil society organizations do not include those groups interested in acquiring political power, hence the usual exclusion of political parties." (15). This coding protocol is followed by a list of civil society organizations with an interest in Lake Winnipeg water quality that may be cited in newspaper coverage.

Direct quote
A direct quote is a type of attribution in which the exact words of a person, organization (or spokesperson of an organization) or report is used. Therefore, quotation marks are used.

Paraphrase
A paraphrased attribution does not use the exact words of a person, organization or report; rather, the journalist places the person, organization's or reports ideas in his or her own words. Quotation marks are not used.

Actor/Defining Source
An actor or defining source is the person or organization that frames the story, appears to be in the "driver's seat" of the story or who appears to be initiating the story (i.e. their perspective is central and prominent). For instance, public relations practitioners often design news releases to put their organization in the "driver's seat" (e.g. "XYZ organization announces that…") and may hope that journalists will also do so. Key indicators of actors *may* include:

1. an actor included in the headline (e.g. "scientist finds XXX"; or "Organization cries foul")
2. verbs in the lead paragraph linking an actor to the article topic.

If there is a defining source in the story, it will likely be near the beginning, and may be the first source, though this is not always the case.

The actor/agent may or may not have initiated the story. The interest in this content analysis is to determine who journalists are *presenting* as the main actors/agents.

See further instructions on identifying actors at variable 22.

Procedure: Is it important that this coding sheet be read in full prior to every coding session in order to refresh the coder's memory of the protocol. In order to avoid coder fatigue, no coding session should exceed 1.5 hours. After a 30-minute break, the coder may return to coding. To further avoid fatigue, amount of coding should not exceed 8 hours per day. If the coder notices fatigue prior to this time limit, he or she may end coding for the day, or take longer break until he or she feel capable of returning to work.

Variables

1) Date (month/date/year) e.g. 09/20/2005

2) Year

1 =   1991
2 =   1992
3 =   1993
4 =   1994
5 =   1995
6 =   1996
7 =   1997
8 =   1998
9 =   1999
10 =   2000
11 =   2001
12 =   2002
13 =   2003
14 =   2004
15 =   2005
16 =   2006
17 =   2007
18 =   2008

3) Section
1 =   A
2 =   B
3 =   C
4 =   D
5 =   E
6 =   F
7 =   G
8 =   H
9 = not given

4) Page number:_____

Note to coder: leave blank if not given

5) Author

Note to coder: If more than one author is given, a relatively rare occasion, just give the first author named

1 =   Helen Fallding
2 =   Val Werier
3 =   Bill Redekop
4 =   Frances Russell
5 =   Laura Rance
6 =   Bartley Kives
7 =   Mia Rabson
8 =   Dan/Daniel Lett
9 =   Paul Samyn
10 =   Carol Sanders
11 =   Mary Agnes Welch
12 =   Aldo Santin
13 =   Lindor Reynolds
14 =   Rolf Penner
15 =   David O'Brien
16 =   Kevin Rollason
17 =   Gerald Flood
18 =   Leah Janzen
19 =   Paul Egan
20 =   Don Lamont
21 =   Peter Schroedter
22 =   Terry Duguid
23 =   Lindsey Wiebe
24 =   David Kuxhaus
25 =   Joe Paraskevas
26 =   Peter Holle
27 =   Martin Cash
28 =   Bryan Oborne
29 =   Alexandra Paul
30 =   Kenton Lobe
31 =   Tom Ford
32 =   Penni Mitchell
33 =   John Morriss
34 =   Bruce Owen
35 =   Sean Moore
36 =   Gabrielle Giroday
37 =   Jen Skerritt
38 =   Henry (Hank) Venema
39 =   Mike McIntyre
40 =   Cheryl Cornacchia

41 = Murray McNeill
42 = Alan Baron
43 = David Runnalls
44 = Nick Martin
45 = Martin Zeilig
46 = "staff"/brief that does not name anyone
47 = letter to editor – citizen
48 = letter to the editor, with affiliation added (e.g. Manitoba Pork Council)
49 = Editorial unnamed
50 = CP Wire OR some other news wire (e.g. CNS) OR an article from another
       paper (e.g. Grand Forks Herald)
51 = Patti Edgar
52 = Doug Nairne
53 = Allison Bray
54 = John Lyons
55 = Larry Kusch
56 = Josiah Thiessen
57 = Glen Mackenzie
58 = Bud Robertson
59 = Curtis Brown
60 = Brad Oswald
61 = Tina Portman
62 = Paul Gackle
63 = Randy Turner
64 = Selena Hinds
65 = Jon Gerrard
66 = Bob Grant
67 = Gordon K. Edwards
68 = Ed Tyrchniewics

6) Headline and subhead:

_____
_____
_____

7) Word count:_____

(Researcher will re-code later into groups: 1-100 words, 100-200 words etc.)
Instruction to coder: To count words, highlight in word processing document and use "Word Count" option (in the "tools" menu in Microsoft Word.). Highlight from the placeline to the end. If there is no placeline, start at the lead sentence. Include in the word count any descriptor of the author (e.g. "Joanne Smith is a scientist with XYZ organization." If the article includes further information after the main body of the text, such as bulleted information that was presented in a sidebar, also include this information in the word count.

8) Type of article

1 = Hard news
Note to coder: A hard news piece is factual, with little to no opinion
2 = Editorial/column from *Winnipeg Free Press* columnist (author provided)
3 = Op-Ed/guest column or Focus piece written by reader/civil society member/other
Note to coder: in most cases, the affiliation or background of the person who wrote the article is included at the end of the article. Use this information to aid in coding. Also, a "Focus" piece is a sort of guest column in the Winnipeg Free Press.
4 = Editorial (no author provided)
5 = Letter to the editor
6 = Survey
7 = Brief[146]
8 = Other (e.g. Q & A interview)

9a) Source 1 Type:

Notes to coder:
- *If more than one affiliation is given for a source, use the first category mentioned.*
- *If a source re-occurs in an article (e.g. in the first paragraph as the first source, and again in the 12th), code that source only once – i.e. as the first source.*
- *A list at the end of this document gives examples of numerous civil society organizations/NGOs, government actors and industry actors likely to come up in analysis. This list should be referred to by the coder when appropriate.*
- *If source affiliation/type is still unclear after referring to this list, attempt to find out the nature of a source via the internet, rather than guessing.*
- *Particular confusion may be caused by the "scientist-civil society hybrid" category (code #23). The rationale behind this category is that some scientists, such as those that work for the Lake Winnipeg Research Consortium, are also considered part of civil society in this study. The inter-coder reliability analysis will determine if this coding is workable or if changes need to be made.[147]*

1 = Municipal elected government official (city, councillor, rural municipality, mayor etc.)
2 = Municipal non-elected representative (bureaucrats, departments, city reports etc.)
3 = Provincial elected government official – ruling party. Also the "Government of Manitoba."
4 = Provincial elected government official – an opposition party (for most of the article population, includes Conservatives and Liberals). Also, "the Opposition."
5 = Provincial non-elected representative. E.g. various departments (Water Stewardship, Manitoba Conservation etc.). Also, reports by provincial government departments.
6 = Federal elected government official (or spokesperson for that party)

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[146] The category of "briefs" was later merged with "hard news" during statistical processing.
[147] While inter-coder reliability indicated no particular problems with this category, it was nonetheless merged with category #13 during analysis, since the researcher decided that to have a category specifically for scientists with civil society organizations was splitting hairs. The intention had been to measure whether or not having scientists as spokespeople increased a civil society group's chances of being in newspapers. However, such a great deal of data was produced in the content analysis that this particular measurement was deemed less important.

7 =   Federal non-elected person official (e.g. from a Federal department, such as Fisheries and Oceans, Environment Canada etc.)

8 =   Foreign/international government politician, bureaucrat, departmental employee, regulations or report.

9 =   Scientist (and the aggregate "scientists" if no one scientist is treated as a spokesperson for this aggregate)

10 =   Single business owner(s)/representative(s) (non-farmer) *(note: different from business organization, which should be coded #11)*

11 =   Representative of industry/business organization (e.g. Manitoba Pork Council, Keystone Agricultural Producers etc.) *(also code as #11 if just the group is used as a source, such as "The Manitoba Pork Council says…")*

12 =   Manitoba Hydro or other Crown Corporation

13 =   Non-governmental representative/non-profit/civil society representative/think tank (excluding business and industry organizations, which are in their own category, #11)

14 =   Court document or judge. (Lawyers, however, should be coded as representing the person/people/group who hired them).

15 =   Joint governmental entities. E.g. International Joint Commission (IJC)

16 =   First Nations government official/First Nations group

17 =   Farmer(s)

18 =   Citizen/resident with no other included affiliation (also "residents," "cottagers" etc. – aggregate groups of citizens) *If they are indicated to be a member of a civil society organization, code as #13.*

19 =   Fisherman/woman (also aggregate group "fishermen" with no other affiliation)

20 =   Unnamed/unspecified/anonymous

21 =   Clean Environment Commission (CEC)

22 =   Other

23 =   Scientist/civil society hybrid (e.g. Lake Winnipeg Research Consortium Scientists, Eva Pip)

24 =   Independent consulting report (for government, industry etc.)

99 =   Not applicable; No source evident

9b) Name: _____

9c) Type of attribution: (if one direct quote is given, and other words paraphrased, still categorize that source as directly quoted, as their own words have been used at least once.)

1 =   Direct quotes

2 =   Paraphrased

9d) Total number of words attributed to this source _____
Note to coder: to count attributed words, use the same technique described in variable #7. Count those words clearly attributed to the source, whether directly quoted or paraphrased, as well as any descriptors of the source. Include their names and attributions such as "says" in the word counts. If they are quoted twice or more throughout an article (e.g. beginning and the end), count all sections.

Unless words are being clearly attributed to a source, do not count them in the word count. Count only those words and information that obviously comes from the source. Often when journalists paraphrase, it is unclear from whom they got their information. The simplest way to count words, therefore, is to only count those words that are clearly attached to a source. Use your judgement.

10a) Source 2 Type: (same list as in 9a)

10b) Name: _____

10c) Type of attribution:
1 = Direct quotes
2 = Paraphrased

10d) Total number of words attributed to this source_____

11-18) Sources 3 to 10 (repeat above)
Note to coder: Once there are no more sources in an article, choose "99" (not applicable for a and c.). Leave b and d blank.

If there are more than 10 sources, record the source information on a separate piece of paper and append to coding sheet. (additional entries will be made in SPSS database for sources 11-SX if required, if there are more than 10 sources)

18) Total number of sources in story: _____

19) Is some type of civil society/non-profit/NGO used as a source?
1= Yes
2 = No
3 = Yes, but the source is a civil society-scientist hybrid
4 = Yes, in that the author should be considered civil society (E.g. columnist)
5 = The piece is a letter to the editor so, in that way, yes
6 = Residents[148] are included, but they are not affiliated *(does not count letters to editor. Letters to editor are civil society, because they are individuals who cared sufficiently to write a letter and voice their views, without being asked by a journalist)*

Note to coder: a simple <u>mention</u> *of an NGO does* <u>not</u> *mean they are a source. They have to be* <u>quoted</u> *or* <u>paraphrased</u> *to be considered a source).*

If a citizen who is not a member of an civil society group is clearly an interested, engaged individual in the topic, they should also be considered civil society. A simple "streeter," who appears to have just been conveniently available to the journalist, should be coded as #6. These are a sort of weak civil society – they agreed to give their opinion to the journalist, but are not necessarily active, engaged members affiliated with a civil society group. Therefore, different coding is necessary.

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[148] A new dichotomous category was later created to record when residents were used as sources.

Also, while the thesis author considers some journalists of the Winnipeg Free Press, such as Val Werier, to be part of civil society, articles written by them should not result in a #1 coding for this particular variable. They should be coded as #4. The articles written by journalists who exhibit civil society tendencies will be studied separately through non-random content analysis.

Letters to the editor written by individuals not affiliated with industry groups or government should also be coded as #5, not #1 (unless civil society is a source in their letter).

21) Is a linkage made to outside of Manitoba, somehow recognizing complexity, that the watershed is larger than Manitoba, and that the problem is larger than Manitoba?
1 =   Yes
2 =   No
-e.g. mentions of Sask, Alberta, Ontario, States/waters flowing from them
-e.g. Devils Lake articles inherently include this
-e.g. invasive species mentions inherently include this
-use your judgement. Correlation between coders will indicate if this statistic is indeed valid.

22a) Is someone the obvious "actor" or "defining source" in this article? (E.g. "An environmental group has complained XXX", or "The government reported XXX", or "A scientist found XXX") etc.
1 =   Yes
2 =   No
3 =   Yes, because it is a letter to the editor written by a citizen. They are an actor in that way.
4 =   Yes, because the author chose or freelanced this topic.

Note to coders: Do not say yes unless the "actor" is obvious. Try not to over-think this decision. Just use your first impression, of whether or not the journalist is placing someone in the controlling/acting role from the start of the story. Is the article putting forward that source's message most prominently? Many of these articles could come from such things as news releases, scientific discoveries, complaints from somebody/some organization, news conference etc.

These "actors" may or may not have been the impetus for the story – it's all in how the journalist frames it. The rationale for this variable is to judge who is put in the "acting" position by journalists.

It is likely that in many articles, there will be no clear actor in the "driver's seat." If there is no clear actor, please code "no".

22b) If yes for 22a, *who* was in the driver's seat?
(note: some numbers are skipped, in order to make the coding similar to that of the "sources" coding. Still, *be aware that these coding numbers differ from those of the "sources" list. Please. do not confuse these lists.)*

Note to coder: For letters to the editor, code by affiliation of the author, if given. For instance, some letters may be written by a provincial government official, a Manitoba Pork Council representative, or a scientist. Many letters will be written by citizens/residents (#18), but likely not all.

1 =   Municipal government (an official [elected or appointed], "The City of Winnipeg," "The RM of St. Clements etc.)
2 =   Provincial government – ruling party
3 =   Provincial government – an opposition party
4 =   Federal government – ruling party
5 =   Federal government – an opposition party (not necessarily the official opposition)
6 =   Foreign/international government official (elected or appointed)
7 =   Scientist(s)
8 =   Provincial government, "non-partisan" and non-elected
9 =   Federal department, "non-partisan" and non-elected (e.g. Environment Canada)
10 =   Single business owner/rep (non-farmer) (different from business organization)
11 =   Representative of industry/business organization (e.g. Manitoba Pork Council, Keystone Agricultural Producers etc.)
13 =   Non-governmental representative/non-profit/civil society representative/think tank (excluding industry organizations, which are in their own category)
        Note to coder: an appended list identifies a number of NGOs and Civil society organizations likely to arise in the research.
14 =   Lawyer/law firm
15 =   Municipal non-partisan/non-elected
16 =   First Nations official/group
17 =   Farmer(s)
18 =   Citizen(s)/resident(s) with no other included affiliation
19 =   Fisherman/fisherwoman/group of fishers
20 =   Unnamed/unspecified/name deliberately not given
21 =   Other (if "other," note at end of this sheet, variable **#24)**
22 =   Clean Environment Commission
23 =   Scientist-civil society hybrid
24 =   Joint government entity (e.g. International Joint Commission, Conservation Districts)
25 =   Free press writer
26 =   Freelance column writer (Op-Ed writer)
99 =   Not applicable; nobody is put in the "driver's seat"

23) Main article topic:

Note to coder:
- *If several topics are mentioned, try to gauge if one is focused on more than others. If there is no clear main topic from the list, you may wish to choose #3, pollution in general/non-specific pollution/many sources of problems.*

1 =   Algae or algal blooms
2 =   Poor fishing/fish health

3 =   Nutrients/pollution in general; non-specific pollution, but reference to pollution of lake; numerous mentions of many sources of pollution (i.e. various water quality concerns)

4 =   Hog barn(s) and hog industry (development of new hog barns, hog barn regulations, spills at hog barn lagoons, angry hog farmers or industry organizations etc.)

5 =   Agriculture other than hog barns (hog barns may be mentioned, but are not be main focus)

6 =   Water contaminants *other* than phosphorus, nitrogen and *E. coli.* These include heavy metals in water (copper, lead, cadmium etc.) or other toxins (e.g.hormone disrupters. *Note: the toxin myocystin is related to algal blooms and therefore articles focusing on it should be classified as algal bloom-related…any discussions focused on algal blooms and algal toxins should be classified as algal bloom-related*

7 =   Human sewage (treatment, lagoons, spills, public hearings related to sewage, sewage infrastructure, application of human sewage to land etc.)

8 =   Flooding and water quality OR low water levels (highs and lows in water levels); hydro regulation of Lake levels possibly causing water quality problems

9 =   E. coli *(note: is also often discussed as fecal coliform bacteria)*

10 =   Devils Lake/Garrison Diversion

11 =   Pulp and paper/logging

12 =   Pollution from other industry (e.g. potato processing)

13 =   Cottage development near lake

14 =   Wetlands (loss of, reconstruction of, usefulness of etc.)

15 =   Cosmetic fertilizers

18 =   Phosphorus-free detergent

19 =   Other, but still highly related to Lake Winnipeg water quality (if topic is "other", please note what the "other" is at end of coding document in variable #24)

24) Other: Anything else of note in the article.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Note to coder: This could be almost anything that you notice. For instance, were there any factual errors worth noting? Were there any particularly notable/interesting quotes or facts? Would you consider this article a particularly excellent or poor example of journalism? Is there anything notable about how civil society was quoted, if they were used at all? Was there an obvious chance to quote civil society that was missed? Basically, record in this variable anything that stood out. Also, consider the questions above.

Please also include any problems/concerns/confusions that arose during coding

Examples of Source Types

Civil Society and non-governmental organizations (examples):
- Canadian Water Resources Association
- Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources
- Citizens for the Responsible Application of Phosphorus
- Community Foundations of Canada; Foundations in the Lake Winnipeg Watershed Initiative
- Concerned Daly Ratepayers
- Ducks Unlimited Canada
- Fish Futures Inc.
- Friends of the Environment
- Gimli Cottagers Association (and any other named cottagers group/association)
- Grindstone Cottagers Association
  Hog Watch Manitoba
- International Erosion Control Association
- International Institute for Sustainable Development
- International Water Institute (formerly Red River Basin Institute)
- Lake Winnipeg Foundation Inc
- Lake Winnipeg Implementation Committee (The Winnipeg Foundation)
- Lake Winnipeg Research Consortium (LWRC)
- Manitoba Conservation Districts Association (check if is more a QUANGO)
- Manitoba Eco-Network/Manitoba Water Caucus
- Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak (MKO) Inc.
- Manitoba Wildlands
- Manitoba Wildlife Federation
- Mixed Forest Society
- Partners for the Saskatchewan River Basin
- Red River Basin Commission
- Red River Basin Decision Information Network
- Riparian Health Council
- Save Our Lake
- Save Our Seine River Environment Inc.
- The Nature Conservancy of Canada
- Winnipeg Citizens' Coalition

Governmental:
- Environment Canada (Federal department)
- Fisheries and Oceans; The Freshwater Institute (Federal department)
- International Joint Commission (Federal agency[149])
- Manitoba Water Stewardship (Provincial department)
- Conservation Districts Program (Provincial agency)
- Manitoba Clean Environment Commission (Provincial agency)

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[149] Federal agencies are: "Bodies external to Federal Departments which are focused on pursuing certain objectives, as specified in their mandate or mission" (Manitoba Water Directory, 18).

- Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation (Provincial agency)
- Manitoba Hydro (Crown corporation)
- City of Winnipeg
- City of Brandon
- City of Portage la Prairie
- Various rural municipalities

Business:
- Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses
- Keystone Agricultural Producers
- Manitoba Food Processors Association
- Manitoba Livestock Manure Management Initiative Inc.
- Manitoba Pork Council

Appendix II: Coding Sheet

Article number (from 1-39):_____

1. Date:_____

2. Year (give code from coding protocol):_____

3. Section (give code from coding protocol):_____

4. Page number:_____

5. Author (give code from coding protocol):_____

6. Headline and subhead:

_____

_____

7. Word count:_____

8. Type of article (circle):

1 =   Hard news
2 =   Editorial/column/"Focus piece" written by *Winnipeg Free Press* columnist
3 =   Op-Ed/column or Focus piece written by reader/civil society member/other
4 =   Editorial (no author provided)
5 =   Letter to the editor
6 =   Survey
7 =   Brief
8 =   Other (e.g. Q & A interview)

9a. Source 1 type (give code from coding protocol):_____

9b: Source 1 name (and affiliation, if applicable):

_____

9c: Source 1 type of attribution (1 = direct; 2 = indirect) :_____

9d: Source 1 total words attributed to:_____

10a. Source 2 type (give code):_____

10b: Source 2 name (and affiliation, if applicable):

_____

10c: Source 2 type of attribution (1 = direct; 2 = indirect):_____

10d: Source 2 total words attributed to:_____

11a. Source 3 type (give code):_____

11b: Source 3 name (and affiliation, if applicable):

_____

11c: Source 3 type of attribution (1 = direct; 2 = indirect):_____

11d: Source 3 total words attributed to:_____

12a. Source 4 type (give code):_____

12b: Source 4 name (and affiliation, if applicable):

_____

12c: Source 4 type of attribution (1 = direct; 2 = indirect):_____

12d: Source 4 total words attributed to:_____

13a. Source 5 type (give code):_____

13b: Source 5 name (and affiliation, if applicable):

_____

13c: Source 5 type of attribution (1 = direct; 2 = indirect):_____

13d: Source 5 total words attributed to:_____

14a. Source 6 type (give code):_____

14b: Source 6 name (and affiliation, if applicable):

_____

14c: Source 6 type of attribution (1 = direct; 2 = indirect):_____

14d: Source 6 total words attributed to:_____

15a. Source 7 type (give code):_____

15b: Source 7 name (and affiliation, if applicable):

_____

15c: Source 7 type of attribution (1 = direct; 2 = indirect):_____

15d: Source 7 total words attributed to:_____

16a. Source 8 type (give code):_____

16b: Source 8 name (and affiliation, if applicable):

_____

16c: Source 8 type of attribution (1 = direct; 2 = indirect):_____

16d: Source 8 total words attributed to:_____

17a. Source 9 type (give code):_____

17b: Source 9 name (and affiliation, if applicable):

_____

17c: Source 9 type of attribution (1 = direct; 2 = indirect):_____

17d: Source 9 total words attributed to:_____

18. Total number of sources in story:_____

19. Is some type of civil society/non-profit/NGO used as a source?

1=   Yes

2 =   No

3 =   Yes, but the source is a civil society-scientist hybrid

4 =   Yes, in that the author should be considered civil society (E.g. columnist)

5 =   The piece is a letter to the editor so, in that way, yes

6 =   Residents are included, but they are not affiliated

21. Is a linkage made to outside of Manitoba, somehow recognizing complexity, that the watershed is larger than Manitoba, and that the problem is larger than Manitoba?

1 =   Yes

2 =   No

22a. Is someone the obvious "actor" or put in the "driver's seat" in this article from the start?

1 =   yes

2 =   no

3 =   yes, because it is a letter to the editor written by a citizen

4 =   Yes, because the author chose or freelanced this topic.

22b. If yes for 22a, *who* was the actor? (give code from coding protocol):_____

23. What was the main article topic? (give code from coding protocol):_____

24. Is there anything else of note in the article? Problems encountered during coding? Interesting occurrences? Was it a great example of journalism? Is there anything notable about how civil society was or was not used?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix III: Raw Percentage Agreement for Inter-Coder Analysis

Variable	Raw percentage agreement
1 (date)	1.00
2 (year)	1.00
3 (section)	1.00
4 (page number)	1.00
5 (author)	1.00
6 (headline)	1.00
7 (word count)	1.00
8 (type of article)	0.95
9a (S1 type)	0.91
9b (S1 name)	0.97
9c (S1 type of attribution)	1.00
9d (S1 words)	0.80
10a (S2 type)	1.00
10b (S2 name)	0.95
10c (S2 type of attribution)	0.91
10d (S2 words)	0.91
11a (S3 type)	0.94
11b (S3 name)	1.00
11c (S3 type of attribution)	1.00
11d (S3 words)	0.88
12a (S4 type)	1.00
12b (S4 name)	0.91
12c (S4 type of attribution)	0.91
12d (S4 words)	0.91
13a (S5 type)	1.00
13b (S5 name)	1.00
13c (S5 type of attribution)	1.00
13d (S5 words)	0.88
14a (S6 type)	1.00
14b (S6 name)	1.00
14c (S7 type of attribution)	1.00
14d (S7 words)	1.00
15a (S7 type)	1.00
15b (S7 name)	1.00
15c (S7 type of attribution)	1.00
15d (S7 words)	1.00
18[150] (total number of sources)	0.90
19 (civil society as source)	0.95

---

[150] Variables number 16 and 17 (sources 8 and 9) were omitted, as neither coder found more than seven sources in the articles included in the inter-coder analysis.

20 (linkage to watershed)	0.95
21a ("actor")	0.87
21b (name of actor)	0.87
22 (article topic)	0.95

1.00 = perfect agreement; 0.00 = no agreement

Appendix IV: Coefficient Measurements for Inter-Coder Analysis

Variable	Scott's *Pi*	Pearson's *r*
1(date)	1.0	NA
2 (year)	1.0	NA
3 (section)	1.0	NA
4 (page number)	1.0	NA
5 (author)	1.0	NA
6 (headline)	1.0	NA
7 (word count)	NA	0.986
8 (type of article)	0.913	NA
9a (S1 type)	0.932	NA
9b (S1 name)	NA	NA
9c (S1 type of attribution)	1.0	NA
9d (S1 words)	NA	0.781
10a (S2 type)	1.0	NA
10b (S2 name)	NA	NA
10c (S2 type of attribution)	0.818	NA
10d (S2 words)	NA	0.87
11a (S3 type)	0.924	NA
11b (S3 name)	NA	NA
11c (S3 type of attribution)	1.0	NA
11d (S3 words)	NA	0.988
12a (S4 type)	1.0	NA
12b (S4 name)	NA	NA
12c (S4 type of attribution)	0.733	NA
12d (S4 words)	NA	0.562
13a (S5 type)	0.835	NA
13b (S5 name)	NA	NA
13c (S5 type of attribution)	0.689	NA
13d (S5 words)	NA	0.63
14a (S6 type)	1.0	NA
14b (S6 name)	NA	NA
14c (S6 type of attribution)	1.0	NA
14d (S6 words)	NA	1.0
15a (S7 type)	1.0	NA
15b (S7 name)	NA	NA
15c (S7 type of attribution)	1.0	NA
15d (S7 words)	NA	1.0
18 (total number of sources)	0.876	NA
19 (civil society as actor)	0.916	NA
20 (linkage to watershed)	0.892	NA
21a (actor)	0.77	NA
21b (name of actor)	0.854	NA
22 (article topic)	0.941	NA

Appendix V: Information letter

University of Waterloo

Date:

Dear XXX:

This letter is an invitation to consider participating in a study I am conducting as part of my Master's degree in the Department of Environment and Resource Studies at the University of Waterloo under the supervision of Professor Robert Gibson. I would like to provide you with more information about this project and what your involvement would entail if you decide to take part.

This research explores the extent and nature of how civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations and individual citizens with an interest in Lake Winnipeg water quality reach out to and engage with the news media. This research stems from the hypothesis that such actors are often not adequately consulted compared to traditional "elite" sources, such as governmental ones, and the concern that inadequate consultation hinders governance. In this thesis, good governance involves a wide network of actors, societal and governmental. A system of good governance enables a more participatory democracy in which citizens are encouraged to be involved. News media, for good governance, contribute not only by informing citizens, but also by giving citizens and the groups to which they belong a forum in which to voice their views and debate public policy.

This study will focus on how organizations and individuals with an interest in Lake Winnipeg water quality reach out to the news media, why some choose to emphasize media outreach while others do not and how these organizations and individuals believe their activities, particularly their interactions with the news media, affect governance.

Anticipated benefits from this study include a better understanding of how civil society organizations and news media interact, how the result of these interactions may affect governance, and recommendations on how interactions can be enhanced.

Participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve an interview of approximately 30 to 60 minutes in length to take place in a mutually agreed upon location. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences by advising the researcher. With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded to facilitate collection of information. Upon your request, the researcher will consult with you for accuracy of any quotations prior to any publication. On the consent form, you have the option to choose whether you are willing to have information provided be attributed to you, or to remain anonymous, in which case your name will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study. Data collected during the study will be retained for two years in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's home. Only researchers associated with this project will have access. The one potential but minimal risk for civil society representatives is that the information they provide might not be well-received by

other civil society members or journalists and, as such, their networks could be at risk; accordingly, they do not have to answer questions they do not wish to, may retract statements after they have been made, may request to remain anonymous, and may contact the interviewer after the interview with any concerns. If the researcher notices an area of potential concern, she will contact the interviewees to discuss the information prior to any publication.

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information, please contact me at (204) 757-2263 or by e-mail at kzubrycki@hotmail.com. You can also contact my supervisor, Professor Robert Gibson at 519-888-4567, ext. 33407 or e-mail rbgibson@uwaterloo.ca.

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. However, the final decision about participation is yours. If you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Susan Sykes of this office at 519-888-4567 Ext. 36005 or ssykes@uwaterloo.ca.

I very much look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for you assistance in this project.

Yours Sincerely,

Karla Zubrycki

Student Investigator