Introduction

In Canada today, there are over 250 ethnic newspapers and about 14 full service radio stations.

These ethnic media, which are predominant in larger urban areas such as Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal, represent over 50 cultures and over five million Canadians whose cultural heritages are neither French nor Anglo-Saxon.

(1979), Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunication Commission (CRTC) granted a license to Toronto-based CFMT-TV, Canada’s first multicultural television station,

two other multicultural television stations have been licensed in Montreal and Vancouver. CRTC, which is the regulatory body for broadcasting and telecommunication stations and services, has also licensed five ethnic specialty and pay-television services, and 44 digital specialty services licensed across the country
Introduction

- These ethnic media, which are usually established by an individual or group of individuals from diverse ethnic groups, offer an alternative view to the news and commentaries in the mainstream media.
- They contribute to a sense of community identity for the people that they serve by meeting the specific information needs of the community. They are the ‘communal voice’ on issues of utmost importance to their audience or readership.

Multiculturalism As The Context

- Canada adopted a multicultural policy in 1971 and officially became a multicultural country. The basic objectives of the multicultural policy include assisting ethnic groups to retain and foster their ethnic-cultural identities.
- Multicultural policy came into effect based on the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, which was originally set up in 1963 to examine how the English-Canadians and French-Canadians could co-exist and have practically equal stakes.
- In 1988, the new Canadian Multiculturalism Act was passed.
- To implement programs and policies that reflected, reinforced, and promoted Canada’s multicultural realities - was extended to include media institutions such as the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), the National Film Board (NFB), and the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC).
Portrayal Of Blacks And Other Visible Minorities In The Mainstream Media

- Media institutions such as the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), Globe and Mail and National Post have come under scrutiny for disregarding minority representations and meaningful input, thus robbing them of credibility as a progressive force within the community.

Portrayal Of Blacks And Other Visible Minorities In The Mainstream Media


  - Blacks are depicted as the undesirable and dangerous 'Other', and one of the most pervasive and persuasive rhetorical strategies is the racialization of crime. More specifically, the Black man is constructed as a threat to the social order, and is a symbol of danger. The repetition of this idea and image in the print and electronic media leads to the notion that the Black man requires continual surveillance.

- Blacks are often depicted as 'criminals', 'villains or victims, or buffoons and folky sitcom types'.

  - First Nation (Canadian Indians) people are represented as 'primitive', 'savage', 'the noble savage', 'the savage Indian', 'blood-thirsty barbarians' and 'the drunken Native').

  - Muslims are seen as terrorists and a threat to national security.

  - The Asian immigrants are represented as 'human cargoes' and 'disease-carrying embodiment of danger who posed a significant threat to the moral, physical and economic well-being of "legitimate" Canadians'.
Portrayal Of Blacks And Other Visible Minorities In The Mainstream Media

- by tapping into a collective portfolio of popular and unconscious images, both print and visual, each of which imposes a readily identifiable frame or narrative spin.

- This identifiable frame or narrative spin naturalizes the stereotypes in such a way that it fits into the commonsense knowledge.

- The more people get exposed to this narrative spin or identifiable frame, the more the stereotypes become "real" to them. "While not "real" in the conventional sense, they become real in their social consequences".

- media institutions in the country usually adopt an only "white sells" approach, especially in advertising.

- the Toronto Star... did an informal survey of television advertisements and found that the "white sells" maxim is still valid. (1999)

- only 10.4 percent of the 1787 television advertisements that were broadcast in over 114 hours of television programming on Canadian and American channels in February 1999 provided more than three seconds of screen time to a visible minority character.

- even though about 31 percent of the total advertisements survey had visible minority characters. "Such low visibilities may set into motion self-fulfilling prophecies. White content attracts white consumers who in turn encourage more white-based coverage in a self-perpetuating manner.

Invisibility Of Blacks And Other Visible Minorities In Canadian Newsrooms

- In spite of the growing population of visible minorities in Canada, Canadian news media are lagging behind in recruiting minority journalists.

- Most of the newsrooms today are still all white.
Invisibility Of Blacks And Other Visible Minorities In Canadian Newsrooms

- In a follow-up study done in the summer of 2004, a slight increase in the number of visible minorities in the newsrooms.

- "Non-whites now constitute 3.4 per cent of the newsgathering staffs of 37 papers that returned questionnaires, compared to 2.6 per cent of staff at papers which responded to a similar survey in 1994."

- That is, 72 out of 2119 journalists in these newspapers are visible minorities. This number is extremely low, considering that visible minorities make up 13.4 percent of the about 31 million population of Canada.

- Most of the jobs in the Canadian journalism industry are hardly advertised for everybody to have equal opportunity of applying.

- It is always through word of mouth and traditional professional networks that people get to know about the possible job opening.

- Since many people of color are not in the newsrooms and also not often in the traditional professional networks, it means that they might not know about the possible job openings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial group</th>
<th>Total number of positions in 2004</th>
<th>Total number of positions in 1994</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South Asian</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>+10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino*</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab/West Asian*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin American</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other**</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>-11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *Not measured in 1994. **Other included Filipino and Arab/West Asian in 1994.
Ethnic Media – Filling In The Gap

- Several of these ethnic media were established in response to the misrepresentation, under-representation and invisibility of visible minorities in the mainstream media.

- They provide room for cultural expressions in the sense that cultural folklore and languages are regularly used in reporting and programming. This draws them closer to the community and gives people in the community a sense of belonging.

Ethnic Media – Filling In The Gap

- Hardly any visible minority group constitutes a homogeneous community. Ethnic media could, therefore, easily become a centre of cultural tensions and political ideology within the ethnic community, because of the differences in political orientations and religious beliefs between the people in the community and the people that run the media.

English Black Print Media In Montreal

- According to the 2001 census, there are about 139,000 blacks living in Montreal.

- This figure includes both the foreign-born and Canadian-born blacks. The majority of them speak the English language and other languages such as French, Yoruba, Igbo, Creole, Hausa, Akan and Gonja.
English Black Print Media In Montreal

Three English newspapers serve the community. These papers are the Ghanaian News, Caribbean Camera and Montreal Community Contact.

- All of these papers are free. Of these three, only the Montreal Community Contact is published in Montreal and this is the primary reason that it is used as a case study in this article.

- Both the Ghanaian News and Caribbean Camera are published in Toronto, but have a strong presence in Montreal through their bureau offices there.

The Ghanaian News, which is a monthly newspaper, focuses on news relating to Ghanaian immigrants in Canada, especially those in Montreal and Toronto. It provides news about what the Ghanaians in Canada are doing and also about on-going developments in the political and economic terrains of the nation of Ghana.

- Its reportage of trade and investment usually appears cautious and conservative. It is an unconscious self-censored approach by the newspaper to steer clear of controversy among the political, linguistic and cultural diversified Ghanaian immigrant population in Canada.

English Black Print Media In Montreal

The Caribbean Camera, which was founded in 1990, is similar to the Ghanaian News in terms of its news focus. It covers more the social and political affairs of the Caribbean countries.

- It is geared mainly towards Caribbean expatriates in Canada rather than working-class black Canadians. Although it does have occasional commentaries and editorials on the social issues such as black-on-black violence in Canada, it rarely runs straight news reports on these issues.
English Black Print Media In Montreal

- The Montreal Community Contact, on the other hand, provides a bridge between these two newspapers. It focuses on the issues that are of importance to all blacks from Caribbean and African countries.

- Unlike the Ghanaian News and Caribbean Camera, it does more in-depth reporting of issues within the Montreal black community and sometimes about blacks in North America (such as the 2005 Hurricane Katrina and blacks in New Orleans, USA).

Montreal Community Contact newspaper: Redefining the Landscape

- The paper, which is published every fortnight, has a total circulation of about 7500. It is a widely read newspaper among the English-speaking Africans and blacks in Montreal.

- In contrast to the images and representations of the black Canadian in Canadian mainstream media, the Montreal Community Contact strives to promote black heritage and celebrate the successes of black professionals in all facets of Canadian society.

Montreal Community Contact newspaper: Redefining the Landscape

- While it provides a means for the social construction of reality, the paper does not allow overt political pressure within the community to affect its editorial judgment. Although most of its news is filtered through the 'black lens',

- Issues such as employment, cultural identity, investment, parenting and social services, politics, business entrepreneurship and immigration affairs normally get ample news coverage in the paper.

- This news angle or focus is in sharp contrast to the approach of the mainstream media, which usually report ethnic minorities or visible minority groups in news stories with a crime angle or feature news stories that are exclusively about the cultural days or festivals of the ethnic groups.
Montreal Community Contact newspaper: Redefining the Landscape

- Since the paper has a circulation of fewer than 8000, this means about 7 percent of the community read the paper.

- Therefore, its impact on the cognitive levels of people, especially people outside the black community, in relation to the representation of visible minorities in the media is limited.

- Secondly, the paper is not accessible to the mainstream audience because it is mainly left at the stores and shops run by blacks. A few copies are sometimes left in the city hall and black community centres.

Montreal Community Contact newspaper: Redefining the Landscape

- Although they might have allowed cultural folklore and expressions that are empowering to their respective communities, their absence among the mainstream audience creates a cultural exclusion instead of inclusion.

- This means we have a situation whereby cultures only talk to themselves instead of one another. The end result of this situation is primarily a cultural enclave, not cultural diversity.

In spite of this problem, the Montreal Community Contact and other ethnic print media would have a far-reaching effect on the Canadian political landscape and culturally pluralistic society.

Conclusion

- Ethnic groups and individuals have appropriated media for their own culturally specific use.

- They adopted media such as newspapers and radio cultural resources to strengthen their identity, heritage and culture within multicultural Canadian society.

- The appropriation of the media becomes necessary in the light of the fact that aboriginal and visible minorities in Canada ‘continue to perceive mainstream media representations of them and their issues as at best inappropriate, and at worst racist’
In its recent release, Statistics Canada indicated that one in five Canadians will be non-white when Canada marks its 150th year of Confederation in 2007.

If this projection holds, the ethnic media may become a powerful cultural tool to be enlisted in winning consent and influencing political decision, due to the fact that they are already situated within the social and political structure of the communities they serve.