The objective framework and mainstream media biases in reporting the Oka crisis.

Anita Christine Recchia
University of Windsor
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THE OBJECTIVE FRAMEWORK AND MAINSTREAM MEDIA BIASES IN REPORTING THE OKA CRISIS

by

Anita Christine Recchia

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research through the Department of Communication Studies in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts at the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

1993
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ABSTRACT

THE OBJECTIVE FRAMEWORK AND MAINSTREAM MEDIA BIASES IN REPORTING THE OKA CRISIS

This thesis presents a case study of the objective framework which guides journalism. Following a chapter about the philosophy of objectivity in the social sciences and challenges to this philosophy, the journalistic method of objective reporting is questioned, based primarily on critical approaches taken by Michael Schudson, Gaye Tuchman, Michael Parenti, Robert Hackett, W. Lance Bennett, Herbert J. Gans, and Richard Ericson. Patricia Baranek and Janet Chan. Other theorists such as Edward Herman, Noam Chomsky, Ben Bagdikian, and J. Herbert Altschull aid in developing a framework for examining the claim of an objective press.

This thesis examines the Kanesatake (Oka) crisis of the summer of 1990, as a case study in journalistic objectivity. The Mohawks' claim to the land, the people including the Warriors, and the development of the crisis of 1990 are explained.

Following the Oka crisis, a group of journalists gathered to evaluate their coverage of the crisis. Because reporters were present on both sides of the barricades, the journalists concluded that their coverage was balanced. However, there were allegations of biased journalism coming from many sides. In order to evaluate the journalists' assumption, a discourse analysis was conducted for 30 dates chosen from the 78-day Oka standoff for Montreal Gazette and the Globe and Mail. Two other mainstream newspapers, the Ottawa Citizen and the Winnipeg Free Press, were analyzed based on eight dates. The study uses an
analytical framework drawn from Parenti (1986) and Cirino (1971). Through an examination of the words and images used, the sources, omissions, headlines, and photographs, the reporting is revealed to have followed the conventional standards of "objective reporting" - a reporting method which shelters a bias in favour of the status quo.
DEDICATION

To Lila and Angelo,
my parents.

Thanks for your
love, support, understanding,
but most of all,
for your
patience.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank my committee. To my chair, Jim Winter, I thank you for your guidance and support. I appreciate the "little shoves" you gave me to lead me in the right direction, without giving the answers away. Your guidance has made my self-confidence grow and for that I will always be grateful.

To my reader, Jim Linton. I thank you for coming on my committee after the project was underway. Also, I thank you for your editing and direction. Your suggestions made my arguments more convincing. To my outside reader, Vito Signorile, I thank you for your comments and suggestions. Your genuine interest in this topic encouraged me through some rough times.

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To Ann Gallant, Lina Beaudry and Sheila Labelle, your friendly disposition and resourcefulness was greatly appreciated. Also, thanks for putting a little extra commission money in my pocket.

To my friend Mike, I thank you not only for your support but also for playing "devil's advocate." Your criticism has made me a stronger person and this thesis better.

To my friend Sandy, thanks for never saying "what's taking so long!" To Sonia, Lorie and the rest of the gang at #67 I thank you for your friendship. To the managers, Brenda, John and Bennie, thanks for working around my schedule for all those years.
Besides dedicating this thesis to my parents, I would like to thank them for encouraging me to pursue a higher education. Without your support, both emotionally and financially, I would never have made it. I would even like to thank my brothers, Tom and Mike, for giving up your computer games long enough for me to write this.
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INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the Kanesatake (Oka) crisis of the summer of 1990, as a case study in journalistic objectivity. Following the Oka crisis, a group of journalists gathered to evaluate their coverage of the crisis. Because reporters were present on both sides of the barricades, the journalists concluded that their coverage was balanced, despite the allegations of biased journalism coming from many sides. However, these journalists assumed that the method they used to write the stories was objective. It was any but: rather it harboured its own bias.

Chapter One discusses the philosophy of objectivity in the social sciences. Following this, in Chapter Two, the journalistic method of objective reporting is questioned based primarily on the critical approaches taken by Michael Schudson, Gaye Tuchman, Michael Parenti, Robert Hackett, W. Lance Bennett, Herbert J. Gans, and Richard Ericson. Patricia Baranek and Janet Chan. Other theorists such as Noam Chomsky and J. Herbert Altschull aid in developing a framework for examining the claim of an objective press.

The Mohawks’ claim to the land, the people including the history of the Warrior Society, and the development of the crisis of 1990 are explained in Chapter Three. Chapter Four analyzes the reporting of the Oka crisis by four mainstream newspapers, the Montreal Gazette, the Globe and Mail, the Ottawa Citizen, and the Winnipeg Free Press. The study is a discourse analysis using an analytical framework drawn from Parenti (1986) and Cirino (1971). The analysis was performed on thirty dates for the Gazette and the Globe while eight dates were analyzed for the Citizen and the Free Press. Through an examination of the words and images used to describe the Warriors, the land, the Mohawk people, native
leaders, the army, and the white protestors; the sources for the July 11 raid, the September 1 advancement, Spudwrench's beating, the "disengagement," the band council elections, and the negotiations; omissions of aspects of the negotiations. July 20, the rock-throwing incident, Spudwrench's beating, and the "disengagement:" headlines which ignored the story or portrayed an image; and photographs of the Warriors and the white protestors; the reporting is revealed to have followed the conventional standards of "objective reporting" - a reporting method which shelters a bias in favour of the status quo. The concluding chapter, Chapter Five, summarizes the findings and gives suggestions for future research.
CHAPTER ONE
THE PHILOSOPHY OF OBJECTIVITY IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

I. Introduction

Adopted from the natural sciences, the philosophy of objectivity was meant to apply the rigorous method of unbiased, observable evidence to the social sciences. As in any field of natural sciences, the aim was to approach infallibility by eliminating human judgment.¹ Researchers were urged and expected to abandon all sentimental egoism and view themselves objectively in the true perspective of time and space.² As a consequence, the social sciences strove for the elimination of researcher bias. Methodological rigour and observation supposedly guaranteed the realization of value-free facts. Research statements that are true are those that correspond to objectively verified events or conditions "out there." Statements that cannot be so verified are either false, nonsensical, or emotive.³ If researchers deviate from the standard of objectivity, they are accused of being unscientific. However, any attempt to study the world in an objective manner must lead to absurdity, for, as human beings, we must inevitably see the universe from a centre lying within ourselves and speak about it in terms of human language shaped by the exigencies of human intercourse.⁴ For critical theorists, by denying our "humanness" so to speak, the dominant, positivistic

⁴ Ibid., p.3.
paradigm has led only to the fragmentation of knowledge which serves the dominant interests of the status quo.

II. The Separation of Facts from Values

There is little doubt about the strong hold the relentless pursuit and acceptance of objectivity in research has on the social sciences. In response to criticism of subjective or emotional research, the social sciences adopted the philosophy of objectivity so research would be accepted as valid, factual, and truthful. By following the method of objective research set out by the natural sciences, the end result would be the "best path to knowledge." Adherence to the method of objectivity practically guarantees acceptance of the research as a set of facts by the positivist scientific community. Objectivity is so pervasive that it is an ideology, "a priestly calling," and a moral philosophy. Objectivity is judged against prior research; it must be verifiable and observable. It predetermines the way to think and the correct and reliable path to knowledge; it is a moral philosophy.

Few obstacles were encountered when the philosophy of objectivity entered the social sciences early in this century. In the mid-1920s, sociology was rapidly becoming a "true science." Specialized research projects and the development of grand theory converged to produce a supposed comprehensive science of society.

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7 Ibid., p.8.
The fact that the social sciences deal with humanistic inquiry did not matter. The method was adopted although it reduced the human entity to an object. Gaye Tuchman in her classic study, *Making News*, writes disapprovingly that the subjective aspects of the social sciences did not matter for twentieth-century positivists. According to the positivistic framework, it was still possible to generalize and test laws regarding human conduct. Some positivists even went so far as to say that the proper topic of sociology is social structures and institutions, and therefore, the problem of subjectivity does not obtain, since unlike people, social structures and institutions do not have consciousness."

Objectivity is narrowly defined as the separation of facts from values. By supposedly purging the mind of all biases, the social scientist is not interested in what is right or wrong or good or evil, but only what is true or false." Furthermore, objectivity means the researcher succeeded in describing the procedures so explicitly that others can reproduce the same results." However, objectivity is much more than the simple separation of facts and values and a replicable methodology. By adhering to a method of observation and value neutrality, the end result is anything but scientific; rather it harbours bias in the very strategies used to maintain objectivity." 

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III. A Superhuman View of the World

Social scientific research prior to the early 1900s was viewed negatively due to its lack of objective methodological rigour and unbiased factual observation.\(^{13}\) By the end of the 1920s, a science of society and a science of humans were firmly entrenched which boasted the elimination of subjectivism and the benefit of standard methods of inquiry. Humans were viewed as machines which could be understood scientifically and rationally.\(^{14}\) Knowledge was attained by dealing with observable, physical phenomena that could be re-studied, re-manipulated, or re-measured by anyone who wished to test the conclusions offered.\(^{15}\) The observable, mechanical properties of things were primary; their other properties were derivative.\(^{16}\) Reality was viewed as residing in the object. The researcher simply had to describe what was discovered.\(^{17}\) We have a world of facts based only on measurable data. In an article titled, "The Logic of Science in Sociology," Walter L. Wallace stressed the need for methodological adherence and observation for sociological inquiry. He wrote:

> From these two bases [method and observation], science strikes forcibly at the individual biases of its own practitioners that they


\(^{15}\) Purcell, *The Crisis of Democratic Theory*, p.22.


\(^{17}\) R.H. Brown, *A Poetic for Sociology*, p.44.
may jointly pursue, with whatever falter and doom, a literally superhuman view of the world of human experience. 18

He emphasized that such an approach leaves nothing to the imagination, and therefore, the research findings will be accepted as fact by the social scientific community. Knowledge is gained solely through the act of observation of an objective world.

Value neutrality coupled with direct observation provided the foundation for scientific methodology. Scientific inquiry into human behaviour focused on what could be tested by sense experience, namely observation. The philosophy of objectivity maintains that there exists an independent objective reality which we can know through observation. The scientific method claimed scientific knowledge was made possible only by dealing with observable, physical phenomena that could be re-tested by anyone who wished to challenge the conclusions offered. Its connection with reality and its accuracy of representation become the standards on which objectivity is judged. 19 The ideal of knowledge was set up as a set of statements which is "objective" in the sense that its substance is entirely determined by observation. 20 There was no mention of the mental processes of feeling, intention, etc. Knowledge of the human animal was reduced to what could be seen; all non-observable mental processes were of no consequence. 21 B.F.

20 Polanyi, Personal Knowledge. p.16.
Skinner's behaviourism took this theory to its furthest extreme. He believed that even feelings could be reduced to observation.

Scientific method seeks knowledge that is the product of understanding the forms of experience. These are found in system, order, and generality, and thus scientific method is the attempt to render reality intelligible and meaningful by seeking knowledge in system, order, and generality. An objective scientific method allowed for the realization of knowledge while ostensibly avoiding individual biases. Scientific inquiry may result in disputes about the findings, yet what remains unchallenged throughout is the philosophy of the method and its ability to reveal truth and knowledge. The scientific method sets strict guidelines, a system of rules, for the pursuit of knowledge which if followed would result in an accepted fact. It is merely a convenient summary of experience in order to save time and trouble in recording observations. As Matson noted, the ruling values of objectivity in inquiry "are to be celebrated, not examined." Its universality makes method an essential quality of scientific inquiry. It has been argued that the method of science is the most objective means of social inquiry. Those who support the science of society stress the need for objectivity to the point that the idea of subjective inquiry is dismissed as ludicrous. In sum, armed with the proper semantic yardsticks, the modern positivist may move with confidence through any thorny field of science or

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23 Polanyi, Personal Knowledge, p.9.


social science...without the necessity of prior briefing or professional acquaintance with the terrain - readily separating...sense from nonsense, truth from metaphysics, reality from myth, and (in a methodological sense if no more) right from wrong.26

By adhering to the scientific method, any researcher could add to the pursuit of knowledge.

Scientific methodology’s success depends upon the elimination of personal biases and external observation. Newton, Descartes, Locke, Hobbes, Spinoza, the Chicago school of sociology, B.F. Skinner, and the dominant paradigm of the twentieth-century operated on the philosophy of neutrality. The ultimate goal of objective scientific inquiry is.

...an unbiased image of the world - not a given scientist’s personal image of the world, and ultimately not even a human image of the world, but a universal image representing the way the world “really” is, without regard to time or place of the observed events and without regard to any distinguishing characteristics of the observer. Obviously, such disembodied “objectivity” is impossible to finite beings, and our nearest approximation to it can only be agreement among individual scientists. Scientific methods constitute the rules whereby agreement about specific images of the world is reached. The methodological controls of the scientific process thus annihilate the individual’s standpoint, not by an impossible effort to substitute objectivity in its literal sense, but by substituting rules for intersubjective criticism, debate, and ultimately, agreement.27

Objectivity is nothing more than an expression of the presence of agreement, a consensus which determines knowledge.28 Scientific knowledge is determined by an existing consensus which presents the scientific community with a frame of reference and in turn, provides meaning to future observations.29

29 R.H. Brown, A Poetic for Sociology, pp.36-37.
IV. The Statistical Ritual Challenged

There are a number of criticisms concerning the underlying "objective" basis of the scientific method. It has been argued that rather than advancing knowledge, scientific inquiry becomes the mere following of a ritual.\textsuperscript{30} The method predetermines the data or facts manufactured and the problems studied. It gives meaning to the observations made and the results. Researchers choose to analyze scientific laws which are not in doubt. They describe the practical demonstration of scientific law, and not its critical verification.\textsuperscript{31} Armed solely with "the Method," a researcher can move from subject to subject regardless of the content, problem, or area resulting in "abstracted empiricism."\textsuperscript{32} However, the hard-headed insistence on objective natural-science methodology has actually led to methodological inhibition in social science.\textsuperscript{33} The inhibition results from mere "puzzle-solving" research which is consistent with previous research.\textsuperscript{34} Dallas Smythe writes in Dependency Road:

By limiting knowledge to the perceptually verifiable, they have made it socially respectable for intellectuals to find busywork, to make comfortable careers for themselves by the ready rewards for "counting" more and more about less and less.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{31} Polanyi, \textit{Personal Knowledge}, p.13.
\textsuperscript{32} Mills, \textit{The Sociological Imagination}, p.59.
\textsuperscript{33} Matson, \textit{The Broken Image}, p.61 & Mills, \textit{The Sociological Imagination}, p.57.
\textsuperscript{34} Thomas S. Kuhn, \textit{The Structure of Scientific Revolutions} (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), p.185.
\textsuperscript{35} Smythe, \textit{Dependency Road}, p.197.
Research must be related to previous and current work so others can verify it. This is needed for "objectivity."\textsuperscript{36}

The very notion of objectivity has been acknowledged as an oxymoron. As argued by H.I. Brown, objectivity is inconsistent with the idea of a body of knowledge based on fallible presuppositions since it leaves scientific knowledge without a foundation. Knowledge is never permanent. Simply by altering presuppositions not only is the body of knowledge changed, but the kinds of questions asked and the standards of judgment are altered also. Thus knowledge is an arbitrary construct and there is no reason to take any proposed body of theory as being the ultimate truth or more valid than another. Objective research is not possible; yet it is a basic assumption of logical empiricism.\textsuperscript{37}

Methodological inhibition is but one consequence of the scientific method. The philosophy of objectivity has also fostered the fragmentation of knowledge which serves the interests of the status quo. For if a sociological inquiry, in the name of objectivity, excludes every kind of transcendence then it must inevitably become an apologia for the status quo.\textsuperscript{38} C. Wright Mills describes "objective" research as a "bureaucratic" development. He writes:

\begin{quote}
Research is used, and social scientists are used, for bureaucratic and ideological purposes...In fact the ideological relevance of social science is inherent in its very existence as social fact. Every society holds images of its own nature -- in particular, images and slogans that justify its system of power and the ways of the powerful. The images and ideas produced by social scientists may or may not be consistent with these prevailing images, but they always carry implications for them. In so far as these implications become
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{36} Mills, \textit{The Sociological Imagination}, p.127.
\textsuperscript{38} R.H. Brown, \textit{A Poetic for Sociology}, p.17.
known, they usually come to be argued over and used: By justifying the arrangement of power and the ascendency of the powerful, images and ideas transform power into authority...and by distracting attention from issues of power and authority, they distract attention from the structural realities of the society itself.\textsuperscript{39}

Since positive science seeks predictability and control, then it would seem to have a vested interest in those conditions that provide the possibility for this type of knowledge - a stable, technically manipulable sociopolitical order. In fact, the strong relationship between positivism and the political order suggests that science itself is an ideology. As Mannheim notes:

The concept "ideology" reflects the one discovery which emerged from political conflict, namely, that ruling groups can in their thinking become so intensively interest-bound to a situation that they are no longer able to see certain facts which would undermine their sense of domination. There is implicit in the word "ideology" the insight that in certain situations the collective unconscious of certain groups obscures the real condition of society both to itself and to others and thereby stabilizes it.\textsuperscript{40}

One area which is left unexamined is the political order. "Liberal practicality," which forms the underlying ideology of capitalist society, has been served by the scientific methodology. Mills writes:

...American sociologists have tended strongly to take up one empirical detail, one problem of milieu, at a time. In a word, they have tended to scatter their attention. According to the "democratic theory of knowledge" they have insisted that for any social phenomenon there surely must be a very great number of minute causes. Such "pluralistic causation" as it is called, is quite serviceable to a liberal politics of "piecemeal" reform. In fact, the idea that the causes of social events are necessarily numerous, scattered and minute, readily falls into the perspective of what may be called liberal practicality.\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{39} Mills, The Sociological Imagination, pp.177 & 80.

\textsuperscript{40} Quoted in R.H. Brown, A Poetic for Sociology, p.16.

\textsuperscript{41} Mills The Sociological Imagination, p.85.
The end result of such research is a "harmonious balance," a "continuous process" in society in which sudden changes are viewed as unfortunate deviations.\footnote{Ibid., p.86.}

V. Conclusion

The scientific method with its guiding force, the philosophy of objectivity, has been entrenched in the social sciences for decades. Only in the last thirty years or so have scholars significantly challenged the basic underpinnings of a science of society. The very roots of the scientific method are based on strict standards, which pretend to be open to advancement. It is simply a sequence of research projects structured by accepted presuppositions which determine what observations are to be made, how they are to be interpreted, what phenomena are problematical, and how these problems are to be dealt with.\footnote{H.I. Brown, Perception, Theory, and Commitment, p.166.} In fact, it ignores even the possibility of other existing realities apart from itself. Michael Schudson explains the closed association as such:

Science defends its own way of knowing as amoral, not moral, secular and not divine, sceptical and not dogmatic, essentially public and not esoteric...What this suggests is that while science may be the source of near-religious commitment and faith for persons in the modern world, that faith is held and justified in distinctively modern terms whose enunciation has been encouraged by the social context of modern life.\footnote{Michael Schudson, Origins of the Ideal of Objectivity in the Professions: Studies in the History of American Journalism and American Law, 1830-1940 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1990), p.21.}

The philosophy of objectivity in the social sciences has been supported by the "liberal practicality" of the status quo. Based on the philosophy of libertarianism,
the elite culture of the status quo regard the masses as stupid, incapable of handling true freedom. Because they are unable to manage themselves, the elite managers of the status quo construct a model for the public that serves the interests of the state capitalist system, not true democracy. The "objective" framework is part of this system.\textsuperscript{45} Although objective observations made may provide contradictory evidence to existing theories, it does not mean the old theories must be adapted or abandoned. Eventually, as noted by Thomas Kuhn, "scientific revolutions" may take place after the theories can no longer explain phenomena. However, the philosophy of objectivity is anything but unbiased or value-free. It predetermines the way to think and dismisses human qualities as being unscientific and irrational. The "objective" framework is part of a deliberate product manufactured by the elite culture that stifles true democracy in favour of the continuation of the status quo.\textsuperscript{46} The philosophy of objectivity is solely a strict adherence to a ritual which provides nothing to liberate humankind, only to dominate it.


CHAPTER TWO
JOURNALISM AND OBJECTIVITY

I. Introduction

The second chapter will discuss the philosophy of objectivity as adopted by journalists. Objectivity in journalism is supposed to mean "just the facts" are reported; however, what it essentially does is to follow a method of reporting. The method of objective journalism focuses on recent, unusual events. Regardless of the event, however, the method of objectivity favours officialdom. As a result of the method, "news" is anything but objective. Its bias is inherent in the method itself.

Objective reporting is one of the values or methods of the "socially responsible" press. Identified in the United States by the Hutchins Commission of 1947 and subsequently in the 1956 publication of Four Theories of the Press, the theory of social responsibility holds that journalists are adversaries of government and advocates of the public interest. The Hutchins Commission was struck, in part, owing to the paradox of increased corporate concentration in press ownership, combined with the longstanding rationale of public service. With the publication of the Hutchins report and its concomitant furore in the press, "objectivity" experienced a revival. The purpose was to end mounting criticism of the press, by emphasizing a socially responsible role, which in fact amounted to self-regulation in a libertarian free market.¹ A similar development occurred in

¹ According to the authors of Four Theories of the Press, the theory of social responsibility was a modified version of the libertarian concept. In the libertarian model, the press was totally free, whereas the social responsibility doctrine recognized the perils of unrestrained freedom. A socially responsible press applied
Canada following the Kent Royal Commission's Report on Newspapers in 1981. when newspapers scrambled to join voluntary and self-regulating press councils. to pre-empt government legislation and regulation. In a fall 1991 article by Maclean's George Bain, he wrote that the media are "ever militant in guardianship of the public interest and aggressive in the pursuit of the truth in government." Journalists must subscribe to the theory of social responsibility or their credibility would be damaged seriously. Objectivity is practised out of necessity.

At the turn of the century, "objective" news developed in the industry to attract and appeal to more readers through advertising and to end nineteenth-century sensationalism. The penny press stressed news, not opinion, and this same emphasis was pursued by the wire services. For the wire services, emphasis on "just the facts" meant presenting information acceptable to the editorial policies of all the newspapers subscribing to the service. Objective reporting became financially valuable to the all-purpose newspaper that sought to expand its profits through increased advertising revenues and subscriptions. Objective journalism was invented by the newspaper owners who wanted to attract advertisers, improve efficiency and increase profits. The "neutral" copy of the wire services could be shared by all the papers, regardless of their political leanings. However, the turn of the century brought with it a general scepticism concerning democracy and the

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2 Cited in Winter, Common Cents, p.xv.
4 Tuchman, Making News, p.159.
5 Altschull, Agents of Power, p.131.
6 James Winter, Common Cents, p.xvi.
market. As Schudson describes it, the notion of objectivity arose in the 1920s as a response to this scepticism. Altschull describes the scepticism.

"[T]he world of faith - in God, in one's fellowman, in the future - had disintegrated and been replaced by a world dominated more by fear of the future than by confidence in it. Institutions were on the defensive. The age of muckrakers had been one of persistent assault on all institutions. Will Irwin, Upton Sinclair, and the others had cast so much doubt on the validity of the old assumptions that it was no longer possible to perceive the press simply as the servant of the people, as their eyes and ears in alerting them to incipient tyranny. Moreover, there was increasing concentration of the ownership of the mass media... In this situation, it was only natural that the press would slip in public esteem, that it would cease to be revered as an ally of the people, and that there would arise a new word to express an overriding need of the institution of the press: credibility."

It was "only then that the ideal of objectivity as consensually validated statements about the world" and a demonstrated impartiality arose." However, the fundamental emphasis was not on just facts, because even the facts could not be trusted: rather the emphasis was placed on the methods used to gather the facts. By developing the methods of fact gathering, the media took on a new role.

Tuchman describes the media's new role as follows:

Instead of simply representing a democratic ideal by making information available through competitive journalism, the media and news-workers saw themselves as arbiters of social reality. Just as scientists discovered the facts about nature by using normatively established objective methods, so, too, the news media and the news professionals would use their methods to reveal social reality to the news consumer... Not only must news-workers be factual, but facts must also be fair. By balancing opinions of newsmakers and weighing evidence, newsmakers must strive to achieve a fair presentation of the facts in order both to inform the public and to maintain credibility."

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8 Schudson, *Discovering the News*, p.122.
II. Fast, Fresh, & Fair

Objectivity was redefined to suit the work of journalists. Based on the same philosophy of an independent, objective world, the news business expanded the definition to include the criteria of fairness, balance, and accuracy in addition to the concepts of neutrality and impartiality. Regardless of the term used, they essentially mean the same thing: detachment on the part of the journalist.\(^{10}\) The news media are expected not only to be fair but also to be first and with the freshest angle.\(^{11}\) Fairness and balance represent the journalistic standard of objectivity today because they are easier to practice and make room for a more active role on the part of the reporter. By using the objective method of newsgathering, journalists can reach evaluative conclusions and state opinions, as long as personal values and opinions are excluded. Any "subjective reactions" which appear in the story are not viewed as a violation of the objective method but as reactions to the news.\(^{12}\) This form of "news" is called "interpretive reporting."

As previously mentioned, for journalists, objectivity is simply defined as the separation of facts from values. The media simply mirror society. The news is what it is: newsworthy people and events, happening "out there" in the real world.\(^{13}\) This philosophy of objectivity in journalism is supported by liberal-pluralist folklore and many studies regarding objectivity, such as content analyses.

\(^{10}\) Winter, *Common Cents*, p.xv.

\(^{11}\) Commercial for WDIV-TV, News 4, Detroit, Michigan airing in June 1992 explains their news coverage as being "fast, fresh, and fair."


The liberal-pluralist view holds that competing views will be reported equally by an independent media. Developed during the Enlightenment, liberal-pluralism assumes that when conflicting ideas and opinions compete freely with one another, the truth will emerge. Those who subscribe to the code of objectivity believe journalists are neutral, able to examine all sides of an issue critically, and uphold societal standards of decency and good taste. Furthermore, the news generated is truthful and factual, which is considered to be guaranteed by the format for news. However, if the unfortunate occurrence of bias should appear in a story, the standard procedures available for detecting bias will reveal the slant. Since research methodologies such as content analysis believe objective reporting is possible, coding numerous stories as negative, positive, or neutral, will reveal the overall slant to the coverage. According to those who adhere to the philosophy of objectivity, the most common source of bias is the reporter's open support of one view over another in a story. In order to be objective, the journalist must present "both sides" of the story, provide facts to support the claims made, use quotation marks to indicate the statements of the source, and organize the story in an inverted pyramid style so the most important information is first. The methods used to gather and assess news are the guarantee of objectivity.

14 Tuchman, Making News, p.165.
17 Tuchman, Making News, p.179.
Objective reporting is the result of the use of similar fact-gathering methods; like the scientific method, the journalistic method is validated by consensus.\textsuperscript{18} The very guidelines for achieving objectivity in reporting shelter a bias. As pointed out by numerous writers, the code of objectivity protects the very foundations of the status quo. The reality mirrored by the media is a product pre-constituted by the powerful.\textsuperscript{19} Altschull calls objectivity a "mechanism of social control," in which the ideology of the powerful is disseminated.\textsuperscript{20} For example, objectivity means quotes, which come from "authorized knowers," who represent the status quo. While not appearing to favour one side over the other, the media operate within boundaries of accepted opinion, and therefore, the prevailing definition of the political order is maintained.\textsuperscript{21} Schudson says the methods for an objective story incorporate their own bias. Besides protecting the dominant ideology of society, the media also protect the fundamental beliefs in "welfare capitalism, God, the West, Puritanism, the Law, the family, property, the two-party system, and perhaps most crucially, in the notion that violence is only defensible when employed by the State."\textsuperscript{22} Ericson, Baranek, and Chan state that the bias incorporated in the code of objectivity is not the result of a conspiracy but a result of routine practices. They write:

...objectivity, fairness, and balance serve as public-culture legitimations for journalistic practices. This implanting helps to explain the central place of investigative reporting in both the

\textsuperscript{19} Cohen & Young, \textit{The Manufacture of News}, p.27.
\textsuperscript{20} Altschull, \textit{Aagents of Power}, p.133.
\textsuperscript{22} Schudson, \textit{Discovering the News}, p.184.
working culture of journalists and public mythology about journalism. The belief is created both within the craft and publicly that "real reporting" consists of extensive investigation and profound discovery using multiple sources and methods in arriving at the truth. Journalists internalize this "as if" world, even in face of the fact that it could not be farther from the truth of what their work actually consists of. If they were not committed to these procedural concepts, if these values were not experienced as objectively real, it would prove too difficult to sell the legitimacy of their product publicly, and especially to their regular sources. In keeping with other modern bureaucracies, news organizations often respond more to the myths of their institutional environment than to their actual work situation. 21

Former New York Times correspondent David Halberstam notes.

...the only thing that mildly approached objectivity was the form in which the reporter wrote the news, a technical style which required the journalist to appear to be much dumber and more innocent than in fact he was. So he wrote in a bland, uncritical way which gave greater credence to the utterances of public officials, no matter how mindless these utterances... 24

In sum, Jack Newfield writes. "Objectivity is believing people with power and printing their press releases." 25

By appearing to be objective, the media protect themselves from the wrath of source or audience criticism, libel suits, etc. The appearance of objectivity depends heavily on the use of official sources and normalized themes, such as the new, the unusual, etc. W. Lance Bennett writes that the media are not biased in spite of, but precisely because of, the professional journalism standards intended to prevent bias. 26 He writes:

26 Bennett, News: The Politics of Illusion, p.76.
The objectivity norm hides the connection between reporting practices and their economic, organizational, and political contexts. At the same time, the objectivity norm gives the press the look of an independent social institution. Moreover, even though actual reporting practices distort the political content of the news, they fit conveniently into the objectivity code, thereby obscuring their political effects. In this fashion, journalistic norms and reporting practices operate together to create a strong status quo bias in the news - a bias that is well hidden behind a facade of independent journalism.27

Part of the method of a media story is to answer the "five-W's" - who, what, where, when, why, as well as how. Based on this method, it is assumed the journalist just has to report the observable facts and leave the job of understanding them to the reader.28 The method of the inverted pyramid and the five-W's has also been enhanced by reliance on a practice known as "precision journalism." According to Meyer, "precision journalism" has made the journalism industry better at finding facts, inferring causes, pointing to ways to correct social problems, and evaluating the efforts of such correction.29 "Precision journalism" applies statistics and survey techniques to problems journalists regularly report, and as such, it is transparent positivism. Mills' "abstracted empiricism." Precision journalism was designed to get at aggregate views of large numbers of people so that journalists would not always be guessing. It was also designed to free journalists from relying on experts.30

27 Ibid., p.92.
29 Ibid., p.4.
Although journalists may not be aware of it, they are perhaps the strongest remaining bastion of logical positivism in America. "Precision journalism" adds credence to journalism, it simultaneously reveals the contradictions and the weaknesses associated with the whole myth of objectivity. The inverted pyramid style requires the selection of what is important. "Precision journalism" requires that a set of issues be investigated in polls or surveys, using selected operationalized questions. According to journalistic practice, objectivity is further enhanced by the use of

...a common or standardized format for packaging the news: the story. Stories serve as an implicit check on news content by requiring reporters to gather all the facts (who, what, when, where, how, etc.) needed to construct a consistent and plausible account of an incident.

However, the five-W's confine the extent of "news" to the answers to five simple questions instead of providing a full understanding of the context of the story.

III. Who Makes the News?

A study conducted by Herbert Gans, on newsweeklies and television news, found the Knowns (political, economic, social, or cultural elites) made the news roughly four times as often as Unknowns (ordinary people). Since reporters are usually not in a position to witness an event first hand, they have to rely on the

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31 Gans, Deciding What's News, p.184. A connection between journalism and logical positivism is made by Southam News' purchase of the Angus Reid polling firm. In addition, Southam owns 17 dailies, Coles bookstores, the controlling interest of TorStar, et cetera. Winter, Common Cents, p.69.


33 Cited in Leon V. Sigal, "Sources Make the News," Reading the News, p.12.
accounts of others. But as is evident from Gans’ research, elite sources are given the opportunity to give their account of events. Official sources allow the media to appear objective. The assertions of official sources are viewed as credible, truthful, factual, and therefore, safe, familiar, and standardized. Due to the method of objective reporting, a journalist cannot interject her/his opinion into the story. This would be a blatant violation of the objectivity doctrine. Yet, bias is transmitted by the way sources are chosen, as well as what is chosen for the quote or sound-bite. As a result, the spectrum of opinion expressed is narrowly defined.\(^\text{34}\)

Choice of sources can shield extreme bias behind a facade of objectivity.\(^\text{35}\) The manifestations of bias are always indirect. Stuart Hall writes that bias comes through:

...in terms of who is or who is not accorded the status of an accredited witness; in tones of voice; in the set-up of studio confrontations; in the assumptions which underlie the questions asked or not asked; in terms of the analytical concepts which serve informally to link events to causes; in what passes for explanation.\(^\text{36}\)

Accreditation is granted to “right-thinking people” who are viewed as being essential for the maintenance of social order.\(^\text{37}\)

Just who are these official sources? They include legitimated, established institutions such as the courts, police, major political parties and interest groups.


\(^{36}\) Hall, “A World at One With Itself,” p.150.

trade unions and corporations. university professors. and particularly the
government and its agencies. Police versions dominate the discussion
surrounding riots and other forms of deviance. By relying on the law. the police
appear to be acting in the public interest. and therefore. appear objective.
When it comes to the government and its agencies. journalists are often
stenographers taking down every word spoken. regardless of its truthfulness. while
the media claim to be independent of government. Official sources dominate
the media for a number of reasons. First. confronting power is costly and difficult.
Conformity imposes no such costs. Second. the method of objective reporting
requires that statements be supported by authoritative sources. Opinions that
support the existing power arrangement are more easily treated as facts. as
opposed to statements that challenge the status quo and are regarded as
opinionated. The "objective" standard does not wander far off from the political
spectrum of the political orthodoxy of officialdom. Third. journalists and officials
share the same milieu. Because of this. journalists do not investigate questions
which would adversely affect their employers. Finally. official sites of information provide convenient information just in time for media deadlines. Press
conferences. news releases. and other PR measures require little effort. time. and

42 Parenti. Inventing Reality. p.50.
43 Ibid.. p.51.
money.\textsuperscript{44} The unhealthy reliance on official sources severely limits the possible views of all concerned.

**IV. What Makes the News?**

The method of objective reporting indicates what can make the news. News values are said to reflect economic, social, and ideological values.\textsuperscript{45} But news values also allow news events to occur at some locations but not at others.\textsuperscript{46} News values are determined by how recent, novel, proximate, or "relevant" a story is. News should be consonant with social norms, but of course stories which deviate from those norms may have high news value also.\textsuperscript{47} Journalism operates under a set of conventions that dictate what is to be published.

It is well known...that the unusual is chosen over the normal: It is not news when a dog bites a man, but it is news when a man bites a dog. What happens today is more newsworthy than what happened yesterday; what happens close to home is more newsworthy than what happened thousands of miles away. What is said by a prominent person, a "celebrity," is more newsworthy than what is said by an unknown. Whatever is more dramatic and conflictual is more newsworthy than the routine or cooperative.\textsuperscript{48}

These conventions, or news values, define and set the boundaries for what can be news.

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{44} Hackett, *News and Dissent*, p.72.
\item\textsuperscript{45} Teun A. van Dijk, *News as Discourse* (Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Ass., 1988), p.120.
\item\textsuperscript{46} Tuchman, *Making News*, p.23.
\item\textsuperscript{47} van Dijk, *News as Discourse*, pp.121-124.
\item\textsuperscript{48} Altschull, *Agenis of Power*, p.131.
\end{itemize}
Events are deemed newsworthy by basically falling within three categories: by being consonant with journalists’ expectations or by being novel or unusual, or by violating the dominant moral codes of society. Consonance is normal news. Normal news reports the official happenings from the news centres of the world. Most of daily news is filled with official actions and reactions. This preoccupation with “normalcy” creates the impression that there are few serious alternatives to mainstream politics and life styles. Normal news, as articulated by the official elite, also serves to define not just what is “normal” but what is “deviant.” The reporting given in both cases reaffirms the status quo. The definitions of social deviance are essentially expressions of dominant ideology in moral terms. The legitimate range of causes of problems and their legitimated proposed official solutions are dealt with in terms of the dominant ideology. In the case of the capitalist-democratic system, these problems appear as unconnected blemishes in a decent society. The blemishes are swept out of sight but the system remains unchanged.

Drama and conflict are the defining characteristics of the news. Hartley, as quoted in Hackett, says, “The bread and butter of news is conflict, violence, rivalry, and disagreement. But for all these negatives to be newsworthy, a prior assumption of the ‘underlying’ consensus to which they are a threat must be at

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49 Hackett, News and Dissent, p.76.
52 Ibid., p.214.
53 Ericson, Baranek, and Chan, Visualizing Deviance, p.58.
work." In order to justify the system, to restore law and order, and provide a sense of progress, a democracy requires bad news. Ericson, Baranek, and Chan explain that stories of deviance and control acknowledge order and reaffirm the moral boundaries of society. The authors quote from Mary Douglas:

The presence of order...makes disorder possible. Rules, boundaries, categories, and all sorts of cognitive and moral classification systems create lines that are crossed and categories of things for which there are exceptions. Not everything fits, and what doesn't becomes deviant, odd, strange or criminal.

The media become the arena in which the moral bounds of acceptable behaviour are set down, to the point where they become common sense. Notions and opinions that fit into the dominant political culture appear not as arguments or biased manipulations but as "the nature of things." But the media also serve as the forum for the official remedies and controls instituted on the deviant blemish. The deviant behaviour is never seen as a consequence of the system. Instead, the behaviour is a surprise and is reported not as a challenge to the system but as another chance for the system's moral boundaries to re-establish control.

Besides defining the bounds of acceptable behaviour, officialdom explains the meaning of "deviant" behaviour. After an event, protest, etc., becomes "newsworthy," official sources are given top billing. The officials are presented as

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55 Hackett, News and Dissent, p.77.
56 Ericson, Baranek, and Chan, Visualizing Deviance, p.57.
57 Ibid, p.60.
58 Parenti, Inventing Reality, p.xi.
neutral guardians of peace and defenders of the public interest rather than as protectors of the status quo.\textsuperscript{50}

V. When does an Event Become News?

As previously mentioned under what is news, events are news because they are either routine or abnormal. In fact, the process of newsgathering is a routine which focuses on the method of the five-W’s. Everyday newsgathering techniques of the media bias the news in favour of official views.\textsuperscript{61} Not unexpectedly, officialdom is only too eager to help aid the newsgathering process through elaborate public relations. The public relations industry of government and business.

...provide the media organizations with facilities in which to gather,...give journalists advance copies of speeches and forthcoming reports,...schedule press conferences at hours well-geared to news deadlines;...write press releases in usable language; and carefully organize their press conferences and "photo opportunity" sessions.\textsuperscript{61}

By providing the press with all of this information, government and business appear to be open and forthcoming -- in a word, honest.\textsuperscript{62} Despite the origin of the press conference, the photo-opportunity and other staged occurrences, the media view these events as neutral. Cameron Smith, former managing editor of \textit{The Globe and Mail} writes.

The mere calling of a press conference is almost a neutral act...What it does is give the reporters the opportunity to ask questions directly

\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Ibid.}, p.86.
\textsuperscript{60} Bennett, \textit{News: The Politics of Illusion}, p.64.
\textsuperscript{61} Herman and Chomsky, \textit{Manufacturing Consent}, p.22.
\textsuperscript{62} Ericson, Baranek, and Chan, \textit{Visualizing Deviance}, p.21.
of him [whomever is the “star” of the press conference], so that in a sense it’s not managing or arranging the news. 63

However, the staged occurrences are anything but neutral. Press conferences are held by those who want to promote their view on a given situation. Those most likely covered favourably by the media are official press conferences held by business or government. What is revealed adds support to the status quo.

The public relations industry floods the media with information in order to discourage investigative journalism which would uncover some unethical improprieties. Instead of questioning the reality of a public relations spin, the media take the information as fact, as dictated by the objective method, because of its legitimated and accredited source. The staged occurrences establish lines of control regarding information. The occurrences initiate the news-making process, and set boundaries around what will be disclosed by emphasizing some information and leaving out other information. The public relations industry has effectively framed the news, turning the media into a seemingly unwitting mouthpiece. 64 Through massive public relations campaigns, officialdom is not only the subject of news; it creates the news. 65

VI. Where does News Happen?

News happens only where the media say it happens. Gaye Tuchman writes, “The news net imposes order on the social world because it enables news events

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64 Ibid., pp. 43, 44, 29, 62.
65 Ibid., p.50.
to occur at some locations but not at others. News occurs at places of authority, which practically guarantees that the story will be viewed as factual. Based on economics, the media concentrate their newsgathering where they see news as occurring. These are official spots such as government institutions, the police, the courts, etc. The news beat is a routine round of institutions and persons to be contacted at scheduled intervals for knowledge of events. These persons and places have adjusted their schedules to meet media deadlines. After a site has gained the legitimated status, the newsgathering process places journalists at these sites in order to gather the objective facts from legitimated persons.

VII. Why and How does News Happen?

The last component of the method for newsgathering answers the questions why and how. Answering the question "why" is tricky for the journalists' claim of objectivity. In order to avoid "biased" reporting, the journalistic methodology has mastered the use of quotation marks. Gathering quotes from the experts or legitimated news sources allows the journalist to appear objective. By including someone else's opinion, the journalist removes him/herself from participation in

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66 Tuchman, Making News, p.23.
68 Herman and Chomsky, Manufacturing Consent, p.18.
69 Tuchman, Making News, p.144. I remember researching a paper for a third-year class in which I accompanied the "police reporter" on her daily 9:00 a.m. meeting with the media relations officer of the Windsor Police. The officer outlined the arrests made the night before and she wrote a story on the most sensational one.
the story and is allowing the "facts" to speak for themselves. But whenever possible, the facts, as previously revealed by the other elements of the media methodology, are only spoken by official sources at legitimated institutions. The journalist and the media outlet he/she works for are safe. The appearance of quotation marks may, for example, help to safeguard the media against lawsuits.

One of the classic meanings of the term "objectivity" in journalism requires the presentation of "both sides." As long as both sides of "how" an event occurred or two opinions are presented, it is assumed the news consumer can validate the truth value of the statements. However, this very process closes the realm of possible interpretations to just two. The process of presenting "both sides" represents the "bounds of the expressible." Both sides" are newsworthy as long as the opinions or eyewitness accounts of what happened fall within the acceptable bounds of legitimated expression. Anything which may challenge the official view of events or upset the status quo falls outside the range of how a story happened. Altschull answers "how" as follows:

[As] long as 'both sides' are presented, neither side is glorified above the other, and the status quo remains unchallenged. Dissent is permitted, even encouraged, under the code of objectivity, but its limits are proscribed, and the counter-balancing orthodoxy is assured a voice - and not only a voice, but the most powerful of voices, since orthodoxy is represented by the powerful, whose command not only of financial resources but also of newsworthy authority assures it of dominance in the press.

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72 Chomsky. Necessary Illusions, p.45.
73 Ibid. p.48.
74 Altschull. Agents of Power, p.128.
Even the rule of getting "both sides" may fall by the wayside due to space limitations, deadlines, etc., but most likely "because of the political bias that dominates news production." Officialdom is less likely to be slighted in news reports and if such should happen, adequate space is provided for a reply. The same opportunity is not accorded to politically marginal groups such as labour leaders, women, racial minorities, or native people. In sum, "both sides" are confined to the acceptable spectrum of the status quo and are not "all sides." In addition, even if critical views are contained, however rare or non-existent, it is not enough. As Chomsky notes, the critical view must overcome a lifetime of "common sense" learning.

News is presented without context. The method of objectivity does not allow for events to be connected. Events are never presented as the result of past decisions or lack of action because to do so would be subjective. News is presented as isolated fragments which discourages or even prevents a cohesive view of the world. While the media see the spider, they are seemingly unaware of its web. What we end up with day after day is a media system "which presents information in a form that renders it simplistic, nonsubstantive, nonhistorical, and noncontextual; that is to say, information packaged as entertainment." In the end, the media serve as a vehicle of support for the status quo.

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76 Ibid., p.218.
77 "Common sense" views are dictated by the status quo. The news media create these "common sense" views while preventing the formation of alternative views. Winter, Common Cents, p.xiv.
78 Winter, Common Cents, p.xvii.

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VIII. Conclusion

The news, regardless of the medium, is presented in the form of an inverted pyramid with the most important information first, and less important information following in order. The answers to the five-Ws often appear near the very beginning of a news story. By leading with the answers to five seemingly legitimate questions, journalists can claim objectivity, although the editors and journalists have made choices of what those most important facts are.\textsuperscript{80} Facts are found which support those who safeguard the status quo: the government, business, the police, the "experts," etc. Thus, the method of journalistic objectivity is anything but objective. The myth surrounding objectivity is a facade protecting the legitimacy of our capitalistic-democratic system.\textsuperscript{81} Objectivity, and its counterparts of fairness, balance, and impartiality in journalism, do not exist.

IX. A Case Study in "Objectivity:" The Oka Crisis

For this thesis, the 78-day Oka crisis provides a case study in objectivity. Based on the information provided in the first two chapters, the journalists' coverage of the crisis will be evaluated.

In October 1990, the Federation professionelle des journalistes du Québec sponsored a meeting of some 200 journalists in which they examined the role of the media during the Oka crisis which ended the previous month.\textsuperscript{82} To the

\textsuperscript{80} Tuchman, "Objectivity as Strategic Ritual." p.670.
\textsuperscript{81} For examples of the facade of objectivity see Noam Chomsky, Necessary Illusions and James Winter, Common Cents.
\textsuperscript{82} The history and development of the latest Oka crisis are elaborated in the next chapter.
surprise of some journalists, they concluded that the army emerged with a superior public image than the Sûreté du Québec (SQ) because the army better accommodated the media. The army was only criticized after it cut off the journalists' cellular phones on September 17."¹³ The Mohawk Warriors also were granted some favourable coverage until the Montreal Gazette reporters were asked to leave in late July. Due to the favourable coverage granted to the army and the Warriors, journalists agreed that in the end their coverage was balanced."¹⁴ This conclusion was also supported by a content analysis by researchers at the University of Western Ontario who found that eleven Canadian newspapers presented "effective and unbiased coverage."¹⁵

After the events of July 11, the journalists covering the crisis had to make a decision. Some journalists went behind the barricades to cover the story from Kanesatake while other journalists stayed on the outside receiving information from government and military press releases, press conferences, Oka residents, etc. The SQ and later the army would not allow journalists or others to cross the barricades freely. Since the origin and content of reports differed, accusations of

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¹³ The cellular phones were cut off after the SQ secretly obtained a court injunction. In order to obtain the injunction, the SQ alleged the journalists' cellular phones were "in the control of criminals." The journalists denied this, although they admitted to allowing occasional use of the phones to the Warriors. The court order was carried out by the army. Geoffrey York & Loreen Pindera, People of the Pines (Toronto: Little, Brown & Company, 1991), p.380.

¹⁴ Canadian Press. "Media admit Oka coverage swayed by news conferences." The Windsor Star, October 15, 1990. Some page numbers were cut off during the copying process. Wherever possible the page numbers were included.

bias were inevitable. The media, in particular journalists, are considered by many organizations such as Freedom House and Accuracy in Media in the U.S. and the Fraser Institute in Canada, to be "leftists" who could be expected to sympathize with native people's causes. These conservative "think tanks" are part of the "flak" organizations identified by Herman and Chomsky, as part of their propaganda model.\(^6\) The "flak" levelled against the journalists reporting on the Oka crisis came from La Presse's Lysiane Gagnon who accused the reporters on the Mohawk side of the barricades of being "Mohawk sympathizers, radical extremists, willing hostages, hand-picked supporters of the warriors, and victims of the Stockholm syndrome."\(^7\) Maclean's George Bain wrote that the Oka coverage was reported with a general bias in favour of the natives while the federal and Quebec governments were unfairly criticized since "the Mohawks have not been easy to deal with."\(^8\) He went on to say that many journalists believe objectivity is impossible but that should not warrant giving up the attempt at fair and balanced reporting. Even the Châteauguay protestors accused the journalists of supporting the Mohawks. Because of these accusations, the reporters behind the barricades had to defend their professionalism instead of dealing with the real issues. The Globe and Mail's Geoffrey York, The Ottawa Citizen's Ian MacLeod.

\(^6\) For an elaboration of the "flak" organizations see Herman and Chomsky, Manufacturing Consent. The assertions made by the conservative "think tanks" fly in the face of more than 40 years of research into corporate influence on the news, the social construction of news, and conservative biases in reporting. (Cf. Chomsky, Bagdikian, Tuchman, etc.) [For specific research on journalists' political leanings, see Lee and Solomon].


and The Montreal Gazette's Alexander Norris all have defended their stories against such attacks. In view of the charges and counter-charges, and in light of the aspects of objectivity discussed, this thesis will examine the case study of journalistic objectivity in the Oka crisis.

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CHAPTER THREE
OKA: THE HISTORY

I. Introduction

This chapter will explore the history of the Mohawk people in Oka, their claim to the land, and the events which led to and developed during the Oka crisis in the summer of 1990.

The events of the Oka crisis which scarred the summer of 1990 did not develop in a vacuum. The Mohawks of the region have long argued and battled for recognition and a settlement of their grievances concerning the land. It is an issue which has spanned almost three centuries from the early European settlers to the Oka town council’s development plans. In fact, the events of the summer of 1990 were an eerie reiteration of past history.

II. The Land

Documentation reveals that the Iroquoian people have been settled in the area of the Island of Montreal for at least 400 years. On his voyage to the region in 1535, Jacques Cartier wrote that the St. Lawrence Iroquois (the name given by Cartier) populated the area of present day Montreal and Quebec City. By the time Samuel de Champlain retraced Cartier’s route, some seventy years later, the St. Lawrence Iroquois had left the region.¹ The disappearance of the St. Lawrence

¹ York & Pindera. People of the Pines, p.84.
Iroquois has been attributed to wars with the Hurons and their allies. The Iroquois were driven to New York.²

Although not certain, anthropologists believe the St. Lawrence Iroquois were ancestral to the Mohawk.³ Due to the wars, it is believed some of the defeated St. Lawrence Iroquois were absorbed into Mohawk culture through adoption and marriage. As a result, it is likely the Kanesatake Mohawk of today do have blood-links to the earliest known inhabitants of the Oka region.⁴

By early in the seventeenth century, the Mohawk controlled the fur trade of the entire St. Lawrence Valley. After years of war with the French and the destruction of their towns, the Mohawk left the New York area and settled on the St. Lawrence River. One area settled by the Mohawk was the Catholic Seminary of St. Sulpice. Approximately 100 years later, the mission was moved to Sault-au-Recollet in an attempt to avoid the corrupting influences of white settlers and liquor.⁵ In order to establish the mission in this town, the Sulpicians had to ask for grants of land "for the Indian Mission. Had they asked it for themselves they would not have got it."⁶ Despite the move, the Sulpicians petitioned the King of

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³ Bruce G. Trigger, Natives and Newcomers (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985), p.144. "Mohawk" was the name given to the tribe by the Dutch which translates to "eaters of the flesh." The name which the tribe calls itself translates to "people of the flint." The Dutch name conjures up the image of savages and further exemplifies the colonialists' stereotype of native people. The previous passage is taken from Kanesatake traditionalist Ellen Gabriel speaking at the Third World Resource Centre's 10th Annual Dinner, Windsor, Ontario, November 14, 1992.
⁴ York & Pindera, People of the Pines, p.85.
⁵ Ibid., p.85.
France for a permanent mission, in order to avoid the continued corrupting influences of the white settlers' presence on the natives. Asked by the Sulpicians and colonial officials, the Christianized Indians chose a location for a new settlement: the north shore of the Lake of Two Mountains. Land in the Lake of Two Mountains was granted to the Sulpicians by the King of France in 1717 and 1735. In the case of both grants, the land was turned over to the Sulpicians for the use and benefit of the Indians of the mission, on the express condition that title would revert to the Crown if the Indians vacated the mission.\(^7\) This land, which was granted for the use and benefit of the Indians of the mission, is the core of the land whose ownership is disputed by the Mohawk of Kanesatake.

From 1781 to the present, the Oka Mohawks petitioned to successive colonial governments for claim to the mission's lands. A Privy Council decision in 1912 stated that the land belonged to the missionaries on the condition that they continue to act in the best interests of the Indians.\(^8\) Since the King of France and the Privy Council acknowledged the purpose of the mission, the Oka Mohawks have always stated the land was held in trust for them. According to the terms of the original land grant, the Oka Indians held claim to the land, and this would expire only if the Indians left or died out. Despite attempts to rid the area of Indians by making their lives difficult and even offering them land elsewhere, the Oka Mohawks never left. In the 1930s, the Sulpicians broke their agreement and

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\(^7\) York & Pindera, People of the Pines, p.86.
began selling the land they were holding in trust for the Oka Indians. The validity of these sales has never been recognized by the Oka Mohawks."

In an attempt to resolve the land issue, the federal government bought the land still occupied by the Mohawks from the Sulpicians in 1945. What remained of the vast tract of land of the original mission was 132 lots scattered throughout the Oka region, totalling about four square kilometres or one percent of the original mission's land. These lots were never designated as a reserve but remained Crown land. Two years later, the province of Quebec allowed the town of Oka to expropriate some of the land sold earlier by the Sulpicians to a wealthy Belgian Baron. The land included some of the Pines, which is the land most important to the Mohawks. On portions of the original mission's land, stand the Montreal International Airport and the Oka golf course."

In order to stop the further expropriation of their land, the Mohawks of Kanesatake, Kahnawake (both in Canada), and Akwesasne (which straddles the Canada/U.S. border near Cornwall, Ontario), submitted a comprehensive land claim to the federal and Quebec governments, asserting their right to the lands including the Sulpician mission. Four months later, the Department of Indian Affairs rejected the claim because the Mohawks could not prove they had occupied the land from *time immemorial*, and said if aboriginal title existed it had been extinguished by historical statutes."

Two years later, the Mohawks of

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9 Craig Maclaine and Michael Baxendale. *This Land is Our Land* (Montreal: Optimum, 1991), p.27.


Kanesatake submitted a specific claim for the mission’s land. A specific claim deals with claims regarding the administration of an existing treaty. Based on the King of France’s grants in 1718 and 1735, the Kanesatake Mohawk intended to prove the land was held in trust for the Oka Indians. However, nine years later, the federal government rejected the specific land claim, relying on a Department of Justice opinion that there was no legal obligation owed to the Mohawks.

III. The People

Land claims are submitted under the guidelines of the Indian Act. Created in 1876, the Indian Act imposed a system of elections alien to the Mohawk tradition of the Longhouse. The Longhouse system, a matriarchal system, consists of chiefs chosen by the clan mothers. The Indian Act created a Western style election system which established government-funded band councils. The federal government has never recognized the Longhouse and has only dealt with the Kanesatake band council. The band council would like Kanesatake to become a reserve. The Longhouse followers view the band councils as puppets of the federal government, and have never accepted the Indian Act. The Indian Act created a system of apartheid alienating the traditionalists from the government-funded band council followers. The Longhouse would like Kanesatake to be recognized as Mohawk territory. By the summer of 1990, the Mohawk community was

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12 Begin, Moss, & Niemczak, The Land Claim Dispute at Oka, p.3 and York & Pindera, People of the Pines, p.106.
13 York & Pindera, People of the Pines, p.158.
divided among followers of the band council and those who followed the Longhouse. The divisions date back to the time when the pro-French faction of the Mohawk settled under the guidance of the Sulpician Mission. The people were further divided when a group of Mohawks converted to Protestantism in an attempt to drive the Catholic Sulpicians out of the mission. Despite the divisions, the people of Kanesatake have always been united on the issue of the land which they have claimed as their own for almost three hundred years.

Although the Iroquois have always had a group of men who defended the territory, the Warrior Society was officially named in the 1970s. The Warrior Society sees itself as defender of the Longhouse and the Iroquois constitution, called the Great Law of Peace. They were long considered a cultural movement but some Mohawks have denounced the Warrior Society for protecting the cigarette trade and casinos, and possessing high-powered weapons. Profits from the legal gambling operations in Akwesasne have funded the purchase of weapons and high-tech equipment for the Warriors in Akwesasne and Kahnawake. Kanesatake does not have a sanctioned Warrior Society. The Warrior Society operates under a code of conduct which restricts the use of these weapons. The code of conduct, drafted in 1987, prohibits any consumption of alcohol or drugs, any theft of property, and requires the Warriors to follow the Great Law of Peace. They are a defensive organization which protects Mohawk rights and territory, and

15 Trigger, Natives and Newcomers, p.292. Ellen Gabriel described the church's function as "oppression [of the Mohawk people] in the name of God."

16 Ibid., pp.108 & 112.


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which ostensibly will never initiate action unless directed by the War Chief or the Council of Chiefs. Weapons will never have rounds in the chambers except in emergency situations.  

IV. The Crisis of 1990

Without consulting the Mohawks of Kanesatake, Oka's mayor Jean Ouellette proudly unveiled plans for the golf course expansion in March 1989. The plans would expand the private nine-hole course to an 18-hole course and build sixty luxury townhouses near the course. The expansion would strip eighteen hectares of forest and swampland just to the west of the Pines. Ouellette viewed the planned expansion as a win-win situation in which the town stood to make money through rent from the golf club, increased tourism, and property taxes. 20 When asked if he consulted the Mohawks, Ouellette dismissed them as a potential annoyance and said, "You know you can't talk to the Indians." 21

The groundbreaking ceremony for the golf course expansion was scheduled for August 1, 1989. The Mohawks protested vigorously and in order to avoid a scene in front of the media, the ceremony was postponed. A moratorium was placed on the plans while the federal and provincial governments discussed the issue with the Kanesatake Mohawks, the Oka Golf Club, and Jean Ouellette. In September 1989, the federal government tabled a framework agreement in which the federal government planned on unifying the Kanesatake region, creating a

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19 York & Pindera, People of the Pines, pp. 185 & 186.
20 Ibid., pp. 44-45.
21 Ibid., p. 45.
reserve, and resolving the jurisdictional problems between the town and Kanesatake. However, prior to initiating these plans, the federal government stated that the Kanesatake Mohawks had to settle their dispute with the town of Oka over the Crown-owned lands. This doomed the proposal from the start and the federal government later ignored the fact that the Kanesatake Mohawks never accepted the agreement in the first place. Little had changed since the early days of exploiting the natives. But this time the Mohawks would not give in.

The Mohawks of Kanesatake erected a peaceful blockade on a dirt road leading to the Pines on March 11, 1990, after they failed to obtain a court injunction against the expansion and the moratorium on development was lifted by the Oka town council. The blockade was guarded by armed Mohawk men. Warriors from Akwesasne and Kahnawake were called in by the people of Kanesatake to aid in their efforts. No longer would the Kanesatake Mohawks sit idly by as their land was expropriated further. They were prepared to fight and die for the liberation of their homeland.

The roadblock had remained up for three-and-a-half months. On June 29, the Oka town council succeeded in winning a court order to have the roadblock removed. The Quebec Superior Court ruled that the Mohawk were illegally preventing development of the land and must stop all efforts aimed at keeping

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22 Ibid., pp.48-49.
24 York & Pindera, People of the Pines, p.25.
work crews off the disputed land. The Mohawks had no intention of obeying the court order and they feared the roadblocks would be forcibly removed allowing the police to arrest them. Nothing happened for nearly two weeks.

On July 10, Jean Ouellette ignored pleas from Quebec Native Affairs minister John Ciaccia and called for the Quebec provincial police, the Sûreté du Québec, to enforce the court order. Ciaccia had warned the mayor that settling the situation by force could result in a confrontation with serious consequences for the Mohawk people and Quebec society. In a letter to the mayor, Ciaccia wrote:

We are often accused by aboriginal people of not paying attention to their claims and reneging on our commitments. The situation at Oka lends credibility to those accusations...These people have seen their lands disappear without having been consulted or compensated, and that, in my opinion, is unfair and unjust, especially over a golf course...[E]lected officials must not hide behind laws, but act in a generous and responsible manner. That sign of goodwill would re-establish a climate in which to negotiate a solution that is acceptable and fair to all.²⁷

Ouellette accused Ciaccia of not understanding native issues and asked the SQ to clear the barricades and stop the “criminal acts” in the Pines.²⁸

The Kanesatake Mohawk were awakened early on the morning of July 11 by the sound of cars approaching the area. Approximately 100 SQ officers armed with semi-automatic guns, tear gas, concussion grenades, bullet-proof vests, and heavy equipment surrounded the Pines.²⁹ A SQ officer approached the main

²⁶ Maclaine & Baxendale, This Land is Our Land, p.12.
²⁷ York & Pinder, People of the Pines, pp.78-79.
²⁸ Ibid., p.79.
²⁹ The description of the events of the "Oka crisis" was primarily provided by York & Pinder, People of the Pines and to a lesser extent, Maclaine & Baxendale, This Land is Our Land.
barricade and demanded to speak to the leader of the Mohawks. The group of women who had walked to the barricade said there were no leaders; the people are the leaders. The SQ continued to demand to speak to the leader. The women brought back John Cree, the faithkeeper. The officer informed Cree that they had five minutes to decide what to do. Cree asked and succeeded in obtaining forty-five minutes. During that time the Mohawk people completed their tobacco burning ceremony and prayed to the Creator for protection.

After forty-five minutes, the SQ demanded that the women who had walked to the barricade hand-in-hand, cross the barricade onto the highway. The women naturally refused. Without provocation, the SQ lobbed two cans of tear gas in the direction of the women. The cans fell short and the wind blew the tear gas back in the direction of the police. The police lobbed several more cans of tear gas and concussion grenades in the direction of the women and the guarded barricade.

Overcome by the smoke, the women and the men guarding the barricade retreated into the Pines. The police were now free to fulfill their orders to dismantle the barricade; however, the police marched into the Pines brandishing their weapons. Although neither side has accepted responsibility for shooting first, gunfire erupted that lasted exactly twenty-three seconds. During the barrage of bullets, Corporal Marcel Lemay was wounded fatally.30

30 At the end of the crisis, the Montreal Urban Community police stated the shot which killed Lemay had come from the weapon of a Warrior. The bullet was a steel-tipped "full metal jacket" .223 calibre. The SQ use the .223 calibre but do not normally use the "full metal jacket" type. The coroner agreed with this conclusion. The Mohawks did admit about half a dozen Warriors fired their weapons but the Warriors aimed high. The Warriors were under orders not to fire unless fired upon and when responding they were not to shoot to kill. The weapon that killed Lemay has never been found. York & Pindera, People of the Pines, pp.39-40.
After Lemay was hit and the tear gas blew back towards them, the SQ retreated leaving behind their vehicles and a bulldozer.\textsuperscript{31} The Mohawks used the abandoned vehicles and the bulldozer to reinforce their barricades. As a show of support, the Kahnawake Warriors blocked the Mercier Bridge, the quickest route between Montreal and her south shore suburbs. The Kahnawake Warriors stated that if the SQ were to attack Kanesatake again, the bridge would be blown up.

The actions of the Mohawks in Kanesatake and Kahnawake were immediately condemned by Quebec Premier Robert Bourassa; however, he gave Ciaccia the authority to negotiate directly with the Mohawks. Despite Ciaccia’s sincere efforts at ending the standoff, he did not have the authority to deal with the central issue: the land. Native land claims fall under the jurisdiction of the federal government, and therefore, Ciaccia’s hands were tied. According to the federal Indian Affairs minister, Tom Siddon, the issue was a police matter which fell under provincial jurisdiction. He would not deal with the land issue until the barricades came down. It would take almost three months before the federal government made a firm offer to Oka to purchase any of the disputed land.

The provincial Indian affairs minister arrived in the Pines on July 12 to discuss the concerns of the Mohawk people. Unlike his federal counterpart, he had no reservations about talking with the Longhouse people. Three days later, Ciaccia had a tentative agreement which would have seen the withdrawal of a significant number of police, the re-opening of the Mercier Bridge without fear of

\textsuperscript{31} Following the crisis, the SQ complained that they would have been successful in their operation against the Mohawks if they had had high-powered military technology at their disposal. York & Pindera, People of the Pines, p.27.
arrest, independent observers to monitor the dismantling of the barricades, and full cooperation with the investigation into Lemay’s death. Unfortunately, members of the Quebec Cabinet did not want to deal with the Mohawks. They viewed the actions of the Mohawk people as purely criminal and felt the issue should have been settled by the police. Some members even advocated an all-out assault on the barricades without concern over the inevitable bloodshed. Ciaccia returned to the Pines hours late and told the Mohawks that there was a reduction in the number of police. The Mohawks did not believe the minister and lost all faith in Ciaccia. The tentative agreement fell apart and started a series of broken promises and allegations of “bad-faith” negotiations.

On July 18, the Mohawks drafted a list of demands. The list included title to the lands slated for golf course expansion and the rest of the historic Commons; the withdrawal of all police forces from all the Mohawk territories including Akwesasne and Kahnawake; a forty-eight hour time period in which anyone leaving the areas would not be subject to search or arrest; and the referral of all disputes arising from the conflict to the World Court at the Hague. The Mohawks insisted on three preconditions prior to any further negotiations. There had to be free access to food and other provisions; unhindered access to spiritual and legal advisors; and the posting of international observers to monitor the actions of the police. The Quebec government refused to negotiate amnesty for anyone.

Following July 11, the SQ were given orders not to allow any food or medical supplies into the settlement. The Mohawks believed the policy of the SQ was to starve them out. However, the SQ did not stop alcohol from entering the community. The Quebec Human Rights Commission later confirmed the Mohawk allegations against the police. Even the Rights Commission and the Red Cross were denied entry within weeks of July 11. York & Pindera, People of the Pines, pp.199, 213 & 210.
involved and the question of the police in the Mohawk areas was out of Quebec's jurisdiction.

The demands were set aside while the Quebec government and the Mohawks dealt with the three preconditions. For approximately three weeks, five different drafts of the agreement were discussed. However, there was one problem in all of them. The Quebec government, under pressure from the federal government, refused to accept international observers to monitor the events at Kanesatake and Kahnawake. Allowing international observers was viewed by Ottawa as an implicit recognition of Mohawk sovereignty. Finally on August 12, Tom Siddon crossed the barricades, something which he said he would never do, and signed an agreement on the three preconditions. Negotiations could finally begin.

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Although Siddon's office refused to become involved publicly in the crisis, his office was working to purchase the disputed land. The town of Oka paid a land owner $70,000 for eighteen hectares. The federal government paid the developers $1.44 million for twelve hectares. Oka refused to sell the eighteen hectares to the federal government while the barricades remained up. In early August, not in July as mentioned in Prime Minister Mulroney's press conference, Oka reluctantly sold the land for a total $3.84 million. The Mohawk cemetery was purchased for one dollar. This was all an unnecessary expense according to the Kanesatake Mohawk. They believed purchasing land which was theirs in the first place was basically spending money which was slated for natives.

The signing of the agreement was the result of the work of Justice Alan Gold and the Mohawk people. Gold was appointed by the Prime Minister to negotiate with the Mohawk people to end the crisis. After proposals were re-worded a few times, the Cabinet crisis committee agreed to sign one. Siddon, accompanied by Gold, signed the agreement in the Pines but a Warrior from Akwesasne unexpectedly sat down and signed his Mohawk name to the documents. Someone, no one knows who, wanted a representative from all the Mohawk communities to sign the agreement. Many of the Mohawk people were embarrassed and thought someone was out to make the point that the government had recognized the legitimacy of the Warrior Society. The public was outraged and there was no way the government would be embarrassed like this again during the crisis.

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Four days later the negotiations were scheduled to begin at the Dorval Hilton. Bernard Roy was appointed as federal negotiator and Alexander Paterson was the provincial negotiator. The night before the negotiations were to begin, Paterson received a list of fifty-four Mohawk negotiators: most of them Mohawk nationalists.\textsuperscript{35} In accordance with Mohawk tradition, the talks ended before nightfall.

In spite of the fact that negotiations had begun, Premier Bourassa called on the army to replace the SQ on August 17. The Mohawks welcomed the army, despite the army's superior fire-power. Within days, the army had worn out their welcome. The army moved their razor wire closer to the Mohawk barricades and on August 27, Premier Bourassa called off all negotiations and asked the army to dismantle the barricades. Bourassa said, "We cannot have in Canada or in Quebec this type of democracy or pseudo-democracy that permits citizens, no matter what the value of their ultimate cause, to choose which laws they are going to follow."\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{35} According to Mohawk tradition, before any agreement could be signed, a consensus had to be reached. Although fifty-four names were submitted as negotiators, most of them were just observers who would only be called upon if necessary. The governmental negotiators refused to deal with that many people and at the end of the first day, the Mohawks gave in to the pressure and chose five people to represent them. Both sides agreed to a news blackout.

\textsuperscript{36} The negotiations were called off after the Mohawks drafted a proposal which set out a plan to remove the barricades and replace them with checkpoints. Only commercial buses, ambulances, and those with authorization from the Mohawks would be allowed to pass through the checkpoints. The Mohawks also demanded immunity from search, arrest, and prosecution until the long-term negotiations were concluded and a new relationship was established between the Mohawks and the governments of Canada and Quebec. The Prime Minister called these demands "bizarre" and the negotiations effectively ended. The quote was from York & Pindera, People of the Pines, p.316.
As the army prepared for their new mandate, they announced their intentions at a press conference. In addition to showing a video tape of "Mohawk defences," Lieutenant-General Kent Foster said the army would not fire first but would react in self-defense. Furthermore, the army stated that they would announce all pending advancements before moving.

When the army was called upon to dismantle the barricades, a number of Mohawks in Kanesatake and Kahnawake decided to leave the areas fearing the worst. On August 28, a number of Mohawk women, children, and the elderly tried to leave the Kahnawake reserve by way of the Mercier Bridge. The Mohawks asked for SQ assistance in order to evacuate the people safely. In all, there was a total of approximately seventy SQ and Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) officers to control an angry crowd which had grown to about four hundred people, thanks to the delaying tactics of the police. When the cars were finally allowed to cross, they were pelted with rocks. Car windows were shattered and a number of Mohawks were injured from glass and debris. The police made no attempts to stop the crowd, nor did they make any arrests.

37 According to the army video, the Mohawk Warriors were in possession of such things as rocket launchers and anti-tank missiles. While watching the press conference on television, the Warriors laughed in disbelief. They never possessed such weaponry. The Warriors thought their psychological tactics worked; however, the military used the exaggerated weaponry to its advantage. The army used the weapons as a justification for its actions.

38 When the Mohawks first arrived at the Mercier Bridge, there were only about thirty demonstrators. After being detained by police for about two hours while their cars were searched, the crowd had grown to about four hundred people. The angry LaSalle residents had heard of the attempted evacuation on radio station CJMS.

39 At least six Mohawks were treated in area hospitals for injuries from glass or rocks. A seventy-one-year-old Kahnawake Mohawk, Joe Armstrong, died on September 3 from a heart attack brought on by the stress of the incident.
The rock-throwing incident was not the first time angry crowds had demonstrated outside of Kahnawake and Kanesatake. In Châteauguay, outside of the Kahnawake reserve, demonstrations against the Mohawks were practically a nightly occurrence. From the beginning of the crisis, Châteauguay demonstrators would burn effigies of Mohawks and politicians, taunt the Mohawks, throw debris at the police, harass journalists, and chase and beat individuals they thought were Mohawks. The demonstrators even attacked the International Federation of Human Rights, since they believed the Human Rights group was sympathetic to the native cause. On August 24, the group made an attempt to enter the Kahnawake reserve but were stopped by men armed with baseball bats. The police, who were only a few metres away, did nothing to stop the men. A few days later, Bourassa asked the observers to leave. They reluctantly left since their safety could no longer be guaranteed.\(^4\)

The day after the rock-throwing, the army and the Kahnawake Warriors dismantled the barricades on the reserve and the Mercier Bridge. This action shocked and disheartened the Warriors at Kanesatake. Left isolated and without the Mercier Bridge as a bargaining chip, the Kanesatake Mohawks had to deal with growing pressure put on them by the army and the government.\(^4\)

\(^4\) The International Federation of Human Rights said the only group to treat them in a civilized manner was the Mohawks. The police did nothing and the Quebec government treated them rudely. The IFHR were not told of the decision to call off the negotiations. The IFHR also refuted the governments’ claim that the Mohawks had negotiated in bad faith, thus supporting the Mohawks. The governmental negotiators had to deal within the confines of the framework agreement drafted long before the crisis began and had no room to manoeuvre.

\(^4\) Besides the pressure from outside forces, the Kanesatake Mohawks had to deal with their own internal divisions. Some members of the community did not support the actions and the presence of the Warriors.
On September 18, the Kahnawake reserve was raided by the army in a search for weapons. The army was met by angry residents throwing rocks. The soldiers responded with tear gas, rifle butts, and warning shots. After seven hours, twenty soldiers were injured and seventy-five Mohawks needed medical attention for cuts, bruises, broken bones, and exposure to tear gas. The soldiers seized forty-seven guns of which only three were illegal in Canada.

On August 23 and again on September 1, the army broke their promise and advanced on the Kanesatake barricades without advance notice. The advancement on September 1 was in response to the beating of two Mohawk men by the Warriors Noriega and Lasagna. As the army completed their advancement, the fax arrived at the Treatment Centre warning of their movement. It was two hours late. After September 3, the barricaded territory was reduced to a few hundred square metres guarded by thirty Warriors. Seventeen women, seven children, a handful of advisors, and about a dozen journalists also remained in the barricaded area. They were surrounded by four hundred soldiers demanding the Mohawks' "unconditional surrender."

With regards to the dismantling of the Kahnawake barricades, there were reports that the Warriors had escaped the reserve in Cessnas. This report was fabricated by the army in order to ward off hawkish politicians who wanted an invasion of the reserve. The army did not want a bloodbath. The Mercier Bridge reopened to traffic on September 6.

The Longhouse had disarmed and punished the two Warriors for their actions. Even the two Mohawks beaten said the actions of the two Warriors did not mean all the Warriors were bad. The presence of the Warriors was appreciated by the men.

In violation of their promise, the army also fired a shot on September 3. No one was injured and the Warriors did not retaliate.
In the early morning hours of September 8, the army sent a four-man patrol past the razor wire into Mohawk territory. The soldiers came across Randy "Spudwrench" Horne sleeping in a foxhole. Before he was able to call for help, the soldiers beat him with clubs. Spudwrench was able to inflict a wound on one soldier with a small knife but the soldiers continued beating him and he lost consciousness. As the soldiers tried to drag the Warrior out to the army side, another Warrior caught them in the act. The soldiers ran away. Spudwrench was brought to the Treatment Centre and the Mohawks tried frantically to stop the bleeding. After two journalists summoned the army for help, a military ambulance came to treat the injured Warrior. The Mohawks were distrustful of the army and insisted that Dr. David Gorman, the Mohawk physician, treat Spudwrench. Four hours after Spudwrench was beaten, Dr. Gorman arrived in Kanesatake.

Dr. Gorman said the injuries suffered by Spudwrench were very serious and he had to be taken to the hospital. About twelve hours after his beating, Spudwrench was taken by ambulance to hospital. The ambulance was first directed to Notre Dame hospital but a bomb threat at the hospital rerouted the ambulance to St. Eustache. However, the doctor believed the SQ were waiting at St. Eustache to arrest the Warrior and asked to go to Montreal General. After first driving to Hotel Dieu, the ambulance finally arrived at Montreal General. Despite the promise made by the army that Spudwrench would be allowed to return to Kanesatake, he was arrested on September 12.

To step up the pressure on the Mohawks, the SQ obtained a court order to cut off the journalists' cellular phones, stating that the phones were "in the control of criminals." The court order was carried out by the army who were pressuring
the media to leave. The CBC pulled out of Kanesatake on September 12 leaving no television coverage behind the barricades. On the night of September 15, the army cut all electrical power to Kanesatake. The Warriors were put on full alert but nothing happened. It was another in a series of psychological games aimed at wearing down the Mohawk defenses.44

The psychological games were beginning to take their toll on the Mohawks. On September 25, Terry Doxtator, an Oneida Indian helping the Mohawks, announced a three-step process for disengagement. Without much clout left, the Mohawks said the Warriors would lay down their guns and enter military custody if Quebec agreed to appoint an independent prosecutor to review criminal charges against them. The Mohawks believed the federal government’s promise to discuss the long-term land issues once the Warriors had put down their weapons. The Mohawks believed they accomplished as much as the could. They succeeded in uniting aboriginals across the country. they had support from the European Parliament, the assurance of a House of Commons emergency debate on the situation, and the promise of new aboriginal programs from the Prime Minister.45

After asking the journalists to leave on September 26, the Mohawks began destroying their weapons and any incriminating evidence. They held one last tobacco burning ceremony and were prepared to leave. However, the military did not allow the church leaders to enter the encampment as outlined by the

44 The army shone bright lights into the Mohawk territory and the Mohawks would use mirrors or plastic tarp to deflect the light. The army's intent was to deprive the Mohawks of sleep in order to force them to surrender.

45 The emergency debate never happened nor did any of the inquiries promised either by the federal or Quebec governments. The new aboriginal programs were put on the back-burner also.
agreement. All the previous arrangements had been cancelled by the military so in response the Mohawks refused to leave in an orderly fashion. Instead of walking out the front and placing themselves in military custody, thirty men, sixteen women, and six children, ran toward the woods; they were going home. The Mohawks ignored orders from the military to stop and the night erupted into chaos.

Some Mohawks escaped but others were not so fortunate. Two buses carried Mohawks, some of whom were injured, to the military base in Farnham. Ronald "Lasagna" Cross, the most notorious Warrior, unfortunately fell into the hands of the SQ. In total, about 150 Mohawks were charged as a result of the Oka crisis. Some of the charges included possession of a dangerous weapon, participating in a riot, and obstructing police. Lasagna and Gordon "Noriega" Lazore were the key targets charged with dozens of crimes. When their trial finally ended in February 1992, Lazore was sentenced to twenty-three months while Cross was sentenced to fifty-two months - twenty-five for the beating of a fellow Mohawk. The other thirty-four Mohawks charged were acquitted in July 1992.47

The government had said it would not turn the purchased land over to the Kanesatake Mohawks while the barricades were up and they had possession of weapons. According to the Prime Minister, the government had purchased the

46 Lasagna suffered a beating when he was taken into custody. He refused to answer any of the SQ's questions. Three journalists were also detained for hours by the SQ. One reporter was punched and kicked.

47 Fifteen non-Mohawks were charged in connection with the rock-throwing incident. One man who plead guilty was given an absolute discharge by the judge because he sympathized with the rock-throwers. An Appeals Court ordered the man to spend twenty days in jail. Others were placed on probation and after making a $500 donation to charity they could apply for an official pardon.
disputed land on July 27 and would turn it over after the barricades were down and the "legitimate" leaders of the community were determined.\footnote{The land was purchased on August 8, not July 27 as mentioned by Mulroney. The federal government paid a total of $5.28 million ($3.84 million for the land and $2.5 million for foregone taxes) for the land - one dollar for the Mohawk cemetery. York & Pinder state that the crisis cost the federal and Quebec government's more than $150 million. York & Pinder, \textit{People of the Pines}, pp.219 & 405. However, in an article marking the first anniversary of the July 11 raid, Andre Picard said the total cost was about $235 million for police, soldiers, and compensation. "Hurdles remain at blockade site." \textit{Globe and Mail}, July 11, 1991, p.A5.} He said.

\[T]\he government of Canada has reached agreements for the transfer of the property which we have acquired. The Canadian government is holding that land, holding that land for the people of Kanesatake, until the barricades are down and until life has been returned to normal, and it can be determined who the legitimate representatives of the community are.\footnote{Cited in Winter, \textit{Common Cents}, p.225.}

On May 31, 1991, the federal government forced an election on Kanesatake in order to find their "legitimate" leaders. Fewer than half of the eligible voters turned out. Despite the election and Mulroney's promise, the federal government still has not turned the land over to the Mohawks of Kanesatake. It is now the spring of 1993.
CHAPTER FOUR
OKA: THE MEDIA PRISM?

I. Introduction

This chapter explored the role of the media during the Oka crisis in relation to the claims of "balanced" reporting. In late 1990, content magazine featured two articles which exemplified the debate surrounding the allegations of bias on the part of the reporters behind the barricades. According to Lysiane Gagnon of La Presse, the journalists behind the barricades with the Mohawks were "Mohawk sympathizers, radical extremists, willing hostages, hand-picked supporters of the warriors, and victims of the Stockholm syndrome."¹ Geoffrey York of the Globe and Mail took exception to these accusations and asked Ms. Gagnon "...how could you give your readers a truthful account of the conflict if you were relying on the accounts of others who have a vested interest?"² In light of the content controversy and the journalists' claims to balanced reporting, as indicated in the October meeting, a discourse analysis of four mainstream newspapers is conducted based on MichaelParenti's "Methods of Misrepresentation" and Robert Cirino's guideline for detecting bias. A series of news stories from approximately thirty dates, from the Globe and Mail and the Montreal Gazette, was analyzed with respect to language, positioning, and framing. Additionally, eight days were chosen from the Ottawa Citizen and the Winnipeg Free Press.

² Ibid., p.18.
II. Methodology

In order to examine the journalists' claim to objective reporting, a discourse analysis of articles about the Oka crisis was conducted. Discourse analysis is an interdisciplinary field of study that has emerged from several other disciplines of the humanities and the social sciences, such as linguistics, literary studies, anthropology, semiotics, sociology, psychology, and speech communication. With roots in Foucault, discourse analysis is relatively new in North America, with research dating back to the late 1970s. There is some work which dates back to the 1950s but this method is much more popular in Europe.\(^3\) Discourse analysis embodies a number of theoretical and methodological approaches to language and its use. In order to describe the news, discourse analysis examines textual dimensions such as grammar, descriptions, and sources. Discourse is to be examined in context which allows for a much fuller understanding of its meanings. Contextual dimensions also involve the relation of textual dimensions to political, social, cultural and economic factors.\(^4\) The major aim of discourse analysis is to produce explicit and systematic descriptions of language.\(^5\) Language or discourse is the focus of study in its own right. It does not concern itself solely with statements which are seen as "biased," because this assumes other statements are a simple, neutral reflection of reality, but concerns itself with all discourse.\(^6\)

\[^3\] There is a group in Calgary, Alberta that performs discourse analysis called the Discourse Analysis Research Group.
\[^5\] Ibid., p.24.
\[^6\] Content analysis uses categories which can be reliably coded and imposed on the data. However, content analysis' broad based categories easily obscure interesting differences in discourse since it is concerned solely with "biased"
Discourse analysis is not a method in the traditional sense. It is a broad theoretical framework which approaches discourse in *its own right*, since social texts, such as newspaper articles.

...do not merely *reflect* or *mirror* objects, events and categories pre-existing in the social and natural world. Rather, they actively *construct* a version of those things. They do not just describe things: they do things. And being active, they have social and political implications.  

This discourse analysis will entail a semiotic examination of the language used in the reporting of the "Oka crisis." I will "deconstruct" the language, and like Chomsky, Winter, and others, I will contrast the media portrayal with other recorded material.  

The "deconstruction" method is empowering rather than disempowering, meaning it can be used by any thinking individual. Readers are presented with quotations instead of concealing statistics. Based on the evidence presented in the quotations, readers can make up their own minds.  

For example, as part of the government's public relations campaign, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney said, "They [Warriors] need not have these barricades and they

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8 The other recorded material includes York & Pinder. *People of the Pines*, Maclaine & Baxendale. *This Land is Our Land*, Ellen Gabriel's speech for the 10th Annual Third World Resource Centre's dinner, and the Barricade Production video "Voices of Oka."

It may appear ironic that I am using two journalists' views, York and Pinder, to evaluate the work of journalists including themselves. However, journalists sometimes publish elsewhere what they cannot publish, for various reasons, in their own medium. In addition, in-depth examinations such as are possible in books make valid comparisons with the instant history of news, allowing for reflection and contextualization.

don't need to have guns to get justice." "What this quote ignored was the fact that for 300 years the Mohawks tried to "get justice" through successive colonial governments' standards. Every time their claims were rejected. The call to arms was a last resort.

Three of the four mainstream newspapers which will be examined had journalists on both sides of the barricades. Mainstream newspapers are daily newspapers funded through advertising. The Globe and Mail's Geoffrey York covered the crisis for the month of September from behind the barricades. Alexander Norris and Ann McLaughlin covered the crisis for the Montreal Gazette and Ian MacLeod covered the crisis for the Ottawa Citizen from Kanesatake. A series of roughly 30 dates on which important events happened, will be examined. The dates and why they were chosen are outlined in Appendix I. Based on the articles contained in each of these newspapers, I examined the reporting of the journalists behind and outside the barricades in light of the controversy and claims to objectivity.

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11 A mainstream newspaper is in the business of providing advertisers with audiences. In fact, advertisers pay for 80 per cent of the cost of newspapers. Mainstream newspapers also have large circulations as opposed to the alternative press which have very few readers and are not advertiser supported. Winter, Common Cents, p.xv.

12 The dates chosen as important were not designated in any book or article. I choose them either for their relevance for understanding the crisis or because they were classified as a "big" story. The issues of the Montreal Gazette and the Globe and Mail were copied for all thirty dates. Eight dates were chosen for the Ottawa Citizen and the Winnipeg Free Press. The eight dates chosen are outlined in Appendix I. Since the Gazette and Globe provided enough information, only eight dates were chosen for the Citizen to support the research.
Eight dates were chosen to analyze the coverage of the crisis for the Winnipeg Free Press. Again the dates chosen and why are outlined in Appendix I. The Free Press was chosen not because it had a reporter behind the barricades or even in Oka, but because some of its readership complained the paper gave Oka "too much coverage." "Many" readers were calling the paper and cancelling their subscriptions. According to the researcher for the Osler and MacFarlane content analysis of the Oka crisis, "the Winnipeg Free Press did a good job of covering the Mohawk crisis considering the environment they were publishing in..."\(^{13}\) A discourse analysis will be performed on this paper to see if the coverage warranted such criticism and if the coverage changed as a result of the complaints.

III. The Reporting

In his book Inventing Reality, Michael Parenti outlines a method for detecting bias. Although he admits that selectivity is inevitable in the media and bias results because of this selectivity, he hopes the media would aspire to the goals of fairness and accuracy in reporting.\(^{14}\) Since the media often fall short of this goal, Parenti outlines what he calls the journalistic methods of misrepresentation. In addition, Robert Cirino provided the guideline used for detecting bias in the reporting of the four newspapers. The analysis examined bias as manifested in Words & Images, the Source of the News, Omission of News, Headlines, and Photograph Selection.


\(^{14}\) Parenti, Inventing Reality, p.213.
Bias in media reporting is a result of the political-economic system in which the media play an integral role. The media have a vested interest in protecting the status quo and as a result, the media have a bias that favours the dominant class ideology. The messages implanted in the news are used to create and maintain views and attitudes favouring the establishment. All the while operating under the appearance of objectivity, the press fulfils its system-supporting function by creating and embellishing the news.

The discourse analysis used a blend of the analytical methods of Parenti and Cirino. The investigation covered the following areas: **Bias in Words & Images** which discusses the coverage of the Warriors, the Land, the Mohawk People & Native Leaders, the Army, and the White Protestors; **Bias through the Source of the News** which examine the source of the information for July 11, September 1, September 8, September 26, May 31, 1991, and the Negotiations; **Bias through Omission of News** which discusses the absence of reporting on certain aspects of the Negotiations, July 20, August 28, September 8, and September 26; **Bias in the Headlines** which examines headlines which contradicted or ignored the content of the story and headlines which portrayed a particular image; and **Bias in Photograph Selection** which discusses the image portrayed of the Warriors and the White Protestors.

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15 Ibid., p.213.
III.i. Bias in Words & Images

Images created through the use of words can be used to persuade readers to hate, condemn, disapprove or respect and approve, depending upon the subject of the portrayal. Just the right word can evoke from the reader a desired response.\textsuperscript{17} If repeated enough, the word and the situation described become inseparable, so that the use of the word triggers a standardized response from the reader.\textsuperscript{18}

According to Parenti's thesis, face-value framing or stereotyping has characterized the press' performance from the McCarthy era to present times. Face-value framing is one way to lie by accepting as truth what may be or is known to be lies, then passing them on to the public without rebuttal. Parenti writes,

Without ever saying a particular story is true or not, but treating it at face value, the press engages in the propagation of misinformation - while maintaining it is being merely noncommittal and objective. When challenged on this, some reporters will argue that they cannot inject their own personal judgements into their reports, an argument that overlooks the fact that they are not being asked to - and, in any case, often already do so...[T]hey fail to do what they claim they do, give us a range of information and views that might allow us to form opinions contrary to the ones that permeate their news reports.\textsuperscript{19}

Constant repetition allows these untruths to become accepted as "fact," part of the common sense view of things.

Parenti identifies framing as the most effective propaganda tool. Instead of lying, the communicator can create a desired impression by bending the truth

\textsuperscript{17} Cirino, \textit{Don't Blame the People}, p.163.
\textsuperscript{18} Robert O'Hara, quoted in Cirino, \textit{Don't Blame the People}, p.160.
\textsuperscript{19} Parenti, \textit{Inventing Reality}, p.217.
through emphasis, nuance, innuendo, and peripheral embellishments, without wandering too far from the appearance of objectivity. Framing is achieved in the way the news is packaged, the amount of exposure, the placement (front page or back, lead story or last), the tone of presentation (sympathetic or slighting), and the labelling and vocabulary. Perhaps most importantly, labels and other vocabulary are commonly used to convey politically loaded images. These labels and phrases convey positive or negative cues regarding events or persons, often without, or as a substitute for, supportive information.\textsuperscript{20} As a result, even the most blatantly false or biased statements can be passed off as fact.

The terminology used to describe the Warriors, the land, the Mohawk people and native leaders, the army, and the white protestors will be examined in this part of the analysis.

\textbf{III.1(i). The Warriors}

In order to examine the description of the Warriors, this section will discuss the government’s PR campaign levelled against the Warriors and how it was manifested in editorials, opinion columns, and news pieces.

\textit{III.1(i)a. The Government’s PR Campaign}

As far as the government and military were concerned, the Oka crisis was an exercise in crisis management or public opinion manipulation.\textsuperscript{21} The official strategy was to portray the Warriors as a fringe group with no support from the

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., p.220.
\textsuperscript{21} Winter, \textit{Common Cents}, p.214.
mainstream native society. As a consequence, the Warriors would be discredited and public support for them would dwindle.\textsuperscript{22} The army followed a "script" when handling its public relations campaign. Prior to arriving at Oka, the army knew exactly what it wanted to happen. Press releases were distributed in advance in order to control everything throughout the crisis.\textsuperscript{21} For the government and the military, the Oka crisis was a short-term problem. to be "dealt" with before moving on to the next one, whether it was a constitution, trade agreement or "debt crisis."

The government's PR campaign became evident the very day of the raid. The federal representative Yves Désilets in talks among the Mohawks, Oka, and the golf course, blamed the violence of July 11 on the Warriors. He said the federal government had been trying to negotiate a settlement but "an influx of Mohawk Warriors from neighbouring reserves...with different ideals and different objectives"...dimmed the prospects of a peaceful settlement."\textsuperscript{24} According to Désilets, it was not the "framework agreement" which ended negotiations, but the presence of "outsiders" who did not understand the issues.

On July 20, federal Indian Affairs minister Tom Siddon said that members of the Warrior society were hurting the credibility of all aboriginal people. He said, "Reasonable aboriginal leaders as well as all Canadians, respect the rule of

\textsuperscript{22} York & Pindera, People of the Pines, p.272.

\textsuperscript{23} CP, "Army 'won Oka media war,'" Calgary Herald, October 25, 1990, p.A5.

\textsuperscript{24} This passage was taken from the July 11, 1990 edition of the Ottawa Citizen, "Violence shocks federal official," by the Citizen staff supported by the wire services. Peggy Curran in her article, "Federal mediator blames Warriors for lack of peaceful settlement," printed Désilets' statements in the Montreal Gazette.
law."26 For Siddon, the Warriors were an unreasonable group who would damage the reputation of native people.

Three days later, Siddon's deputy minister, Harry Swain, held a private briefing in which he condemned the actions of the Mohawk Warriors. The press conference was granted on the basis that the media not identify Swain by name. However, due to the "seriousness of the allegations," many newspapers identified Swain by name. After the Globe and Mail made the decision to attribute the statements to Swain, the Montreal Gazette and the Ottawa Citizen followed suit. The Winnipeg Free Press did not identify Swain by name. The statements were attributed to "top federal Indian Affairs officials."26

During the off-the-record briefing, Swain called the Mohawk Warriors.

...a criminal organization...In effect, it seems to be a military occupation. It is a potent combination of guns, cash and ideology. They are pretty successful in cloaking themselves in the guise of Indian rights...27 [Emphasis added].

Although he disclosed no sources for his information on the Warriors, Swain said the dispute "has been 'hijacked' by an 'armed gang' of violent and dangerous

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26 This statement by Siddon was taken from the July 21 edition of the Montreal Gazette, "Ottawa trying to get Oka land: Siddon." The newspaper described the Warriors in this passage as those "...who manned the barricades in Oka with AK-47 assault rifles and threatened to blow up the Mercier Bridge..."

27 Like the Gazette, the Free Press printed Bob Cox's version of the event, "Criminals' control blockade. Ottawa says." However, the Free Press did not identify Swain.

28 Geoffrey York, "Federal official calls Warriors criminals," Globe and Mail, July 24, 1990, p.A1. York acknowledged, at the end of the article, that this press conference was "an indication that Ottawa is accelerating its efforts to paint the standoff as a simple question of law and order." In his newspaper article, York did not ask the Mohawks for their thoughts but quoted Ovide Mercredi, the then vice-chief of the Assembly of First Nations, as saying, "There is community support for the barricades and for self-defense." Mercredi only received three paragraphs and they appeared well into the article.
Mohawk Warriors who have terrified the community’s traditional leaders into an enforced silence.” He continued.

I am sure that the people who live at Oka are not calling the shots now and that blockaded territory is in the control of Warriors who are not blessed by the community, by the Longhouse, by the traditional government or by the Iroquois confederacy.24

[Emphasis added].

In York & Pindera’s book, Swain’s allegations are called “highly misleading.” The Warriors had the full support of the Mohawks of Kahnawake and tacit support from the Mohawks of Kanesatake. In addition, the Warriors were invited by the Mohawks of Kanesatake, and hence, it was not a "military occupation."23

In all four newspapers, Tom Siddon was said to have "contradicted" Swain. Siddon “noted that there is a ‘long history’ of Warrior societies in traditional Mohawk culture. ‘And I respect that.’” He gave no evidence to support the "hijack" theory, saying that he “did not subscribe to rumours.” However, Swain’s statements were given prominence.

The PR campaign continued throughout the duration of the crisis. On August 8, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney,

took a couple of swipes at the heavily armed masked members of the Warrior Society manning the barricades, saying their objectives

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24 Bob Cox, CP, "Warrior are criminals top federal official says," Montreal Gazette, July 24, 1990. Because of the allegations the Warriors and their supporters were forced on the defensive. The Gazette contained a few statements from a Mohawk, Karistanoron, in which he said the Warriors take their directions from the community and don’t act on their own. Carrie Buchanan of the Ottawa Citizen, "‘Criminals’ control Oka,” included the most statements from Mohawks regarding Swain’s statements. A Kahnawake Mohawk, Dale Diome, called Swain’s statements "a smear campaign...The Warriors are not in control at Kanesatake - not politically, not economically.” In both cases, the statements by the Mohawks followed a series of quotes from Swain.

were "not exactly noble. The Warrior Society has access to arms and equipment that is excessively dangerous. They need not have these barricades and they don't need to have guns to get justice. At the end of the day, reason has to prevail over force and only the duly elected governments are entitled to be in possession of these instruments required to keep the peace."" [Emphasis added].

The description of the Warriors was not a quote from Mulroney. The government's description was taken as fact. This element will be discussed in more detail in the next sections. Furthermore, the Warriors were not the only group with "excessively dangerous" weapons: the military's equipment was more powerful. The Mohawks had tried for 300 years to "get justice," according to the successive colonial governments' standards. They even tried to stop the golf course expansion through the courts, and again their claims were rejected. The use of arms was a last resort.

On August 25, Mulroney termed the demands from the "Warrior-controlled" Mohawk negotiating team "bizarre." Although Mulroney, along with most of the federal officials, was absent until this point in the crisis - he was fishing with George Bush - the Globe and Mail's Alan Freeman never mentioned this in his article. "Ottawa's patience wearing thin PM says." Instead the paper described, in detail, Mulroney's statements regarding the Warriors without printing any substantial native response. The article stated.

Calling the actions of Mohawk Warriors "illegal" Prime Minister Brian Mulroney warned that Ottawa will never accede to some of the demands made in talks aimed at ending the standoff in Oka and Châteauguay. Taking his toughest line yet in the lengthy dispute, Mr. Mulroney indicated that the federal government's patience with talks in the six-week standoff is running thin. "The government of Canada and its negotiators will never accept some of the bizarre requests that are coming from the Warriors. The Warriors will have

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30 Wills & Authier, "PM agrees..."
to accept that the *laws of Canada* apply to us all irrespective of our station in life, irrespective of where we come from. We are not going to accede to requests from Warriors some of whom are not even Canadian citizens and whose actions have been, to understate the case, illegal for some period of time. I and the government will not accept that this situation will persist interminably.” [Emphasis added].

The demands made by the Mohawk negotiators were not “bizarre.” The Mohawks wanted title to the lands slated for golf course expansion; the withdrawal of all police from Mohawk lands; a forty-eight-hour amnesty period in which no one leaving Kanesatake or Kahnawake would be subject to arrest; and the referral of all disputes arising from the conflict to the World Court at the Hague.\(^{31}\) On August 25, the Mohawks drafted a plan to remove the barricades and replace them with checkpoints. They also asked for immunity until long-term negotiations on a new relationship with Canada and Quebec were completed. Although a new relationship between the government and native peoples became the basis for the Charlottetown accord, Mulroney at that time classified these demands as “bizarre.” Since the governments refused to budge, the negotiations effectively ended.\(^{32}\) The federal government demanded that the barricades be removed prior to any negotiations. With different mandates and expectations, the negotiations went nowhere.

In the same press conference, the Prime Minister emphasized the government’s strategy of “divide and conquer.” Freeman wrote.

> Mr. Mulroney made a distinction between the Warriors and native Canadians in general, whom he termed as “peace-loving.” But he


said it was clear that in the current standoff it was the Warriors who were in charge. [Emphasis added].

According to York & Pinder, the federal government believed the Mohawks "needed to be rescued from the Warriors." And again on August 28, Mulroney continued the government’s PR campaign of "divide and conquer." In addition to gushing about the wonderful things his government had done for native people, Mulroney, who "looked tanned but tense" according to the Gazette’s Terrance Wills in "Mulroney supports use of army, urges Warriors to yield." branded the Warriors as a "minority group of extremists," and "a band of terrorists" who are flouting Canadian law and as a group who wants immunity from Canadian law for their "lucrative smuggling and gambling operations." Wills did not discuss why Mulroney was sporting a nice tan. In relation to Mulroney’s allegations, the Warriors were men of the community, not a "minority group of extremists." Secondly, the Warriors were certainly not terrorists. They were invited. Finally, the Warriors asked for immunity from charges related to the Oka crisis, not from their supposed "lucrative smuggling" rings. As far as the Mohawks were concerned they had committed no crimes, and therefore, could not be charged.


34 The Citizen ran an article on August 29 by Roy MacGregor, "Peace and quiet: Taken from Oka by fools," in which the claims made by Mulroney concerning his government’s generosity towards native people were challenged. MacGregor spoke of the fact that Mulroney bragged about money and services the government is obliged to pay to natives. The Prime Minister talked of land claim deals that collapsed. MacGregor said that Mulroney never spoke of the money his government had cut from native programs. To end his article, MacGregor wrote, "He says nothing." According to Winter, CommonSense, MacGregor is one of a handful of journalists "who defy the odds and obstacles in their efforts to tell it like it is." p.xiv.

The request for immunity was later reduced to the appointment of an independent prosecutor which was still rejected by Bourassa.

At the end of the *Globe and Mail*’s article on the Prime Minister’s press conference, the paper even mentioned Solicitor-General Pierre Cadieux’s addition to the government’s PR campaign. Cadieux, a no show during the Oka crisis, said “the Mohawk Warriors do not represent their communities in Quebec and use violence and intimidation.”36 As previously mentioned, the Warriors were invited and they had the support of the Mohawk communities.

The same day as Mulroney's press conference, the Canadian Army announced its plans for replacing the SQ at the barricades. Keeping in line with the official PR of alienating the Warriors from the native community, Brigadier-General Armand Roy said in a press conference.

In the event that these Warriors, who have been threatening the civilian population for almost 50 days, decide to hide behind a shield of women and children and continue to defy order and Canadian laws, I will have to take appropriate measures to separate the Warriors from the innocent people they use as hostages.37 [Emphasis added].

On September 8, Federal Justice Minister Kim Campbell added her strident voice to the government’s PR campaign. In a press conference, she said Ottawa would not negotiate any form of amnesty for the Warriors. She said, The Warriors do not represent legitimate native grievances legitimately advanced. They carry guns; they are resisting enforcement of the law and we will not negotiate with them. We will

only discuss the terms of the surrender of their firearms." [Emphasis added].

For 300 years, the Mohawks had tried the "legitimate" methods for land claim settlements. And as was pointed out by Mulroney in his press conference, the Mohawks' claims had been rejected more than once. Since it is likely Ms. Campbell will be our next Prime Minister, more of her press conference should be mentioned. She continued the campaign of "divide and conquer" by saying,

[We must not confuse the highly legitimate concerns of Indian people with the resistance of armed Warriors at Oka...They blatantly use the words of normal Indian claims to mask their true intent just as they mask their faces...Our government respects and honours all legitimate Indian leaders who come forward peacefully." [Emphasis added].

Her government showed "legitimate" Indian leaders just how much they are respected by stalling the land claims process and cutting back on native programs. After the army advanced and surrounded the Mohawks of Kanesatake on September 1, negotiations had ended and only the "unconditional surrender" of the Warriors was the goal.

III.(ii)b. Editorials

The PR campaigns of the government and the military were aided and abetted by the media. There were a number of editorials and commentaries in support of the efforts of the official strategies. Following the July 11 raid, an

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39 Taken from a video recording of Kim Campbell's September 9, 1990 press conference.
40 The cutbacks, etc. by the Mulroney government are pointed out in Roy MacGregor's column. "Peace and quiet...."
editorial in the *Montreal Gazette* called the conduct of the Warriors "despicable and intolerable." Roughly two weeks into the crisis, in the July 28 edition of the *Montreal Gazette*, editor Norman Webster commented in an article titled, "Firepower of Indians must be checked," that:

...[W]e face a much more worrying problem. This is the firepower of the Warrior Society, which Soldier of Fortune’s editor, an expert on these matters, said was "enough to give an army a good run for its money." A day earlier New York State’s top cop, Thomas Constantine, said much the same thing, describing the Warriors’ armament on the Akwesasne reserve on the border near Cornwall, Ont., as greater than that of the entire New York State Police force...The fact that a major artery into Canada’s second metropolis has been closed for more than two weeks by guerrillas with machine guns goes almost unremarked...So does the use of those weapons by the Warriors to create effective no go areas in which criminal activity can flourish - even when band leaders and native populations are strongly opposed. Doug George of Akwesasne Notes said, "What we are dealing with is no less than Indian organized crime, as violent and as corrupt as the Mafia. And that’s a matter of fact."[42] [Emphasis added].

The firepower of the Warriors was extremely exaggerated, not only by the Soldier of Fortune editor but also by the army’s video. In the video, the army said it believed the Mohawks had rocket launchers and anti-tank missiles. The Warriors

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[41] According to Cirino’s thesis, editorials may be used to distort facts in order to persuade the reader to think a particular way. The editorial is titled, "Tragic blundering at Oka."

[42] The Early Fall 1990 edition of Akwesasne Notes, of which George was a part, printed the statement made by the Warriors on September 26, 1990 before they left the Treatment Centre. The statement was taken in its entirety from the Ottawa Citizen but at the bottom of the statement the editor’s note read, "The so-called ‘warriors’ have been denounced by the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and the Mohawk Nation for [sic] its attacks upon native people, its involvement in illegal gambling, smuggling, gun running and narcotics distribution. The Mohawk Nation cautions readers against supporting any group affiliated with the ‘warriors.’ The ‘warriors’ do not represent the Mohawk people.” Akwesasne is a Mohawk reserve which straddles the Canada/U.S. border near Cornwall, Ontario.
never possessed such weaponry."41 Mohawk negotiator Joe Deom called the military's assessment of the Warriors' arsenal "figments of the imagination." He said that the military's overestimation of the Warriors' firepower may be a psychological ploy to justify an armed assault on the Mohawks to the Canadian public.42 The editorial echoed the government's strategy by describing the Warriors as "guerrillas" who created areas of criminal activity. The allegation of smuggling is not fair. They are neither citizens of Canada or the United States, but citizens of North America. The Jay Treaty signed between Britain and the United States in 1794 guarantees natives free passage back and forth between Canada and the U.S., along with their possessions.43 The editorial also emphasized the "divide and conquer" aspect by finding a native journalist who compared the Warriors to the Mafia.

Another Gazette commentary by Gretta Chambers on August 9 condemned the Warriors for damaging the reputation of native people and for pretending to defend the Mohawk communities. She stated in the commentary titled, "Negotiated settlement seems a long way off." that.

...the Warrior Society is in the process of running amok with both the cause it claims to defend and the society for which it pretends to speak. The reputed armed might of the Warrior Society, with its cache of arms and multimillion-dollar war chest of contraband profits, poses a threat, not only to society at large but also to the image of native peoples across the country. [Emphasis added].

There was support for the Warrior Society in both Kahnawake and Kanesatake, and furthermore, support for the Mohawks extended across the country. Many

42 MacLeod. "Mohawks defy..."
"legitimate" native leaders such as Ethel Blondin, Georges Erasmus, Elijah Harper, Bill Wilson, and Ovide Mercredi supported the Mohawks' cause and refused to condemn the Warriors. The legal gambling operations in Akwesasne funded the purchase of arms. Chambers continued, "The aims of the Mohawk Warriors, however, have little to do with the acquisition of a parcel of land here or the promise of a better deal there. They want amnesty for themselves and sovereign status for all Mohawks." The Mohawks were not the only ones calling for sovereignty. "Moderate" native leaders succeeded in incorporating self-government in the Charlottetown accord; before it was defeated.

In his August 17 column, Jack Todd of the Gazette adopted the government's strategy of "divide and conquer." He wrote in his August 17 column, "The Indians Won" that:

While brain-dead politicians from Jean Ouellette to Brian Mulroney have stumbled and bumbled and waffled and hesitated, the Mohawk Warriors have moved in. They've seized control of their own communities to the point where legitimate tribal leaders don't even appear to be represented at the negotiating table...No this is a victory for the Warriors all the way. The sad part is that the losers are the moderate, intelligent Mohawk leaders who, thanks to white bumbling, are going to be saddled with these gun-toting Warriors for a long time to come. [Emphasis added].

In contrast to the "moderate intelligent Mohawk leaders," the Warriors were subtly portrayed as 'unintelligent extremists' who have taken over the community.

Thus, editorials and opinion columns echoed the government's PR campaign instead of questioning the spin on the campaign. The information contained in these columns was, in many cases, misleading. The editorials and columns helped the government's efforts at alienating the Warriors.
Turning to the news, the statement made by Swain that the Warriors did not have the support of traditional Mohawks seemed to ring true, at least according to the newspapers, which found some natives to speak out against the Warriors. The Montreal Gazette’s Alexander Norris, who was criticized for his coverage of the Warriors, wrote a lengthy article titled “Chief agrees: Warriors are criminals.” in which a traditional chief from Akwesasne, Jake Swamp, applauded Swain for his statements regarding the Warriors. Appearing in the July 28 edition of the Gazette, the article stated:

A Mohawk traditionalist chief says Canada’s deputy minister of Indian Affairs was right to describe armed Mohawk Warriors as criminals who have hijacked negotiations to end a bitter standoff between Mohawks and police at Kahnawake and Oka. He decried the Warriors as a gang that engages in “a number of criminal activities, including smuggling, drug-running and gun-running.” He said…many natives in the two communities are afraid to speak out against the armed group…[M]embers of the Mohawk Nation Council of Chiefs said in a statement…that the presence of armed Warriors in the two Mohawk settlements is hurting the chances for a negotiated end to the impasse. [Emphasis added].

Swamp’s connections to a militant anti-Warrior movement in Akwesasne were not mentioned.46 Like the government’s PR campaign, the statements by Swamp were not challenged. According to these allegations, it was the Warriors and not the limited “framework agreement” that destroyed any chance at a negotiated settlement. The government would not negotiate a settlement.

Kanesatake’s Grand Chief George Martin called the Warriors, nothing but an occupying force which must immediately leave our community just as their actions must be accounted for. For no

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46 The connections are outlined in Hornung, One Nation Under the Gun.

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matter how noble the cause to prevent a golf course expansion on ancestral land and burial grounds, violence and intimidation can never be accepted.\footnote{Jack Branswell CP, "Mohawks reject Bourassa ‘unveiled threat.’" 
\textit{Winnipeg Free Press}, August 7, 1990.}

The fact that the Warriors were invited by members of his community was not mentioned. The statement supported the government’s strategy that the Warriors were an unwelcomed “occupying” force.

Lori Jacobs, a native journalist from Kahnawake was quoted by the\textit{Gazette} in Paul Wells’ article, “Deal made only with Warriors chief says.” Following the signing of the precondition agreement behind the barricades, she said.

If they [Warriors] were on the up and up, why would they have to use their Mohawk names and why would they have to wear a handkerchief on their faces? They’re negotiating all kinds of things for the Mohawk people (but) we don’t even recognize them as leaders.

The Warriors masked their faces in order not to be identified. However, the masked faces only served to support the government’s view of the Warriors as criminals.

Crawford Gabriel, a member of the “moderate” negotiating team, said the Warriors posed a danger to the community. “The people on the reserve are not armed and they don’t believe in violence, but the Warriors do believe in violence and it only takes one Warrior with a gun to kill people...”\footnote{Alexander Norris, "Indians split on army incursion." \textit{Montreal Gazette}, September 2, 1990.} The\textit{Montreal Gazette} even went as far away as the Northwest Territories to find Willard Hagen of the Delta Tribal Council who did not see much difference between the Warriors and
"thugs and criminals," as did the government. The editorial which appeared in the
September 9 edition titled, "Native leaders should lead." continued.

He is right. What else do you call armed fugitives from justice who
take over communities, block roads and bridges, ransack homes,
beat up their own people, and taunt soldiers with bush-league, made
for TV bravado?

In an article Alexander Norris described the Warriors' increase in support
from the Mohawks of Kanesatake. However, the support for the Warriors was
undermined by Norris. Norris wrote.

Members of the militant Mohawk Warrior Society, masked and
dressed in camouflage outfits, walked patrols between camps and
roadblocks throughout the disputed territory. assault rifles slung
over their shoulders...Although natives were generally supportive of
the blockade, some questioned whether the Longhouse faction -
those leading the action - obtained a mandate to speak for the entire
community. "They say they always consult the population - well,
they never consulted me," a 21-year-old Mohawk said...[The
paramilitary group - best known for its defense of lucrative
gambling and cut-rate cigarette interests in the other Mohawk
communities - appeared to be gaining credibility in Kanesatake.
Chiefs from the settlement's band council, the federally recognized
authority in Kanesatake, were rarely seen by reporters in the
occupied territory. And despite misgivings about the Warriors' Rambo image, many Mohawks credited the group for providing
much needed force to fend off police in what they viewed as a just
cause. "In a situation like this, you couldn't get by without them,"
Kanesatake band member Doug Lissbeck said. "Unfortunately,
they do serve a purpose." [Emphasis added].

Although the Warriors were "credited" with fending off the police, their support
was questioned. Norris said it "appeared" they were gaining support but the gains
were jeered with "unfortunately, they do serve a purpose." In addition, Norris
reported as factual information, elements of the government's PR strategy.
Although Norris said he had reported the Warriors' views, he consistently took as

fact what the government and some "moderate" leaders said about the Warriors. In the above article, he called the Warriors "militant," a "paramilitary group," who have a "Rambo image." If he reported the Warriors' point of view, it was not covered by this analysis. Worse yet, the Warriors' point of view was not reported at all nor was there reporting to support them.

III.ii(ii) News Reflections: The Warrior as Criminal

Eventually, the government's campaign against the Warriors worked. The newspapers described the Warriors exactly in the manner in which the government wanted them to. On the very day of the SQ raid on the barricades, the Globe and Mail's Andre Picard played up the "divide and conquer" aspect by saying in his headline article for July 12 titled, "Armed Mohawks, police in standoff," that the "Warriors claim to derive their authority from the Great Law of Peace, a claim that is fiercely disputed among various native factions and scholars." [Emphasis added]. Picard provided no support for this allegation. When Quebec Liberal MNA René Larouche resigned because of the precondition agreement signed with a Mohawk Warrior, a so-called "terrorist," the article stated.

Larouche slammed both federal and provincial governments for dealing with the Mohawk Warrior Society, a paramilitary force that is financed by illegal gambling and cigarette sales...[T]he government is humiliating itself as it "capitulates in front of the entire world before professional terrorists, masked criminals." He objected to "recognition, in fact and in law, of a gang of danger-

ous terrorist criminals known by the name Warrior Society as representatives of the Mohawks. [Emphasis added].

The adjectives used to describe the Mohawk Warrior Society are not in quotes nor are they attributed to Larouche. "A paramilitary force..." had become a standard, factual description of the Warrior Society.

Again, the standard description of the Warriors was repeated by Alexander Norris. According to Norris, the Quebec government agreed with Swain's assessment of the Warriors. In an analysis of the "difficult balancing act" the government has had to perform, Norris wrote.

Like his counterparts in Ottawa and like many native critics of the Warriors, Bourassa's government views the paramilitary group as a heavily armed gang of gambling promoters and cigarette smugglers which intimidates its opponents on reserves - not as the legitimate army of a sovereign Mohawk state. Warrior-backed gaming ventures and sales of cut-rate cigarettes deprive the Quebec and federal governments of millions of dollars in tax revenues, after all. [Emphasis added].

According to Norris, the Warriors view themselves as the "legitimate army of a sovereign Mohawk state." Despite the history of a Warrior Society in Mohawk culture, Norris managed to undermine that characterization in his reporting. Instead of focusing on or even mentioning the Warriors' view, he continuously

52 "Moves by PM, Bourassa balance toughness with conciliation." appeared in the August 9, 1990 edition of the Gazette. Other statements which fall in line with the government's position on the Warriors were contained in the article and taken as fact. Norris wrote that the government was reluctant to call in the army for an all-out assault on the Warriors because "...such a strike could lead to bloodshed, blacken the international reputation of Quebec and Canada - and, ultimately, play into the Warriors' hands...Such a confrontation might also have rallied Mohawks and sympathetic non-natives to the defence of the Warrior Society, thus reinforcing the Warriors' self-declared role within Mohawk communities as defenders of native sovereignty."
projected a negative image of them. Like the standard description, Norris did not feel the need to support his "many native critics" statement with quotations.

Protecting the innocent people in Kanesatake who were "hostages" became the pretext for the army's advance on the Mohawks on September 1. Francis Boots, one of the Mohawks beaten by Warriors, which prompted the advance according to the army, said.

...because four or five guys did that it doesn't mean that the rest of the Warriors are doing the same thing...They're trying to do a job they believe is right. It's just a few people that are going to ruin everything for them.

However, the Gazette's Alexander Norris makes a point of challenging this statement in the September 2 edition. After Boots' explanation in "Army push into Kanesatake started with call for help from Mohawk." Norris wrote.

Some Kanesatake Mohawks appear to have disagreed with that generous assessment of the Warriors. One terrified Mohawk woman...said she viewed the beatings as a warning to residents who favoured a moderate approach to settling the armed standoff..."People here are very scared." Jerry Pelletier, a moderate member of the Kanesatake negotiating team, said one Kanesatake Mohawk...was so horrified by the attack on Jacobs that he called the armed forces and pleaded with them to enter the territory and restore order. [Emphasis added].

Again, support for the Warriors was undermined by the reporter. Instead of mentioning their support, Norris called it a "generous assessment."

Norris also printed an interview with Soldier of Fortune managing editor John Coleman in which he said the Warriors planned to take their battle into the woods of Kahnawake and Oka - and later into the cities. "The Warriors provided
no details of how they intend to conduct urban guerrilla warfare...but they did say they are 'ready to drop the (Mercier) bridge into the (St. Lawrence) Seaway.'

The campaign of the 'Warrior as criminal' was adopted in an article by the Globe and Mail's Andre Picard titled "Natives and the Politics of Tobacco." Appearing in the August 15th edition, Picard explained that it was virtually impossible to find Marlboro cigarettes in Canada - the American cigarette is not legally available in Canada - since the blockade had begun. Although "not all cigarette smugglers are native, they are the most flagrant violators of Canadian law." Picard explained how the Warriors benefit from cigarette smuggling:

Many Warriors benefit directly from cigarette smuggling, it is, in many ways, their combat pay. One Warrior involved in the armed standoff at Kanesatake said he earns between $20,000 and $40,000 to drive a tractor-trailer full of contraband cigarettes from Buffalo to Kahnawake, and there is never a shortage of work.

The article implied that all Warriors were involved in cigarette smuggling. The article failed to mention that many of the men involved in the standoff had jobs as ironworkers and construction workers. Also, some of the armed men were not even members of the Warrior Society. For example, the 15-year-old Warrior "Blondie" was a French-Canadian who wanted to save the forest. and Brad Larocque, codenamed "Freddie Krueger," was an Ojibwa student from Saskatchewan who came to support the Mohawk cause. More importantly, the


54 This statement, by Owen Young a lawyer for the Warrior Society, appeared well into a very lengthy article after the crippled cut-rate cigarette business is explained. It even appeared after a quote by Peter Diome of the Mohawk Nation who said, "This is a trade war, an economic blockade, an attempt to destroy the Mohawk people."
Mohawks, like all native people, are not citizens of either Canada or the United States; but citizens of North America. According to the Jay Treaty, native people are guaranteed free passage across the border along with their possessions. However, when a Warrior Society lawyer made reference to the Jay Treaty in the article, his claims were immediately challenged by a chief from Revenue Canada Customs and Excise who said a 1956 Supreme Court decision said the Jay Treaty was repealed by the War of 1812.

In addition to the connections made between the Warriors and contraband cigarettes, a July 21 article in the Montreal Gazette contained the cries of a gunshop owner who was complaining about his decrease in business. The article played up the image of a "heavily armed paramilitary group" by saying.

...while most of his Mohawk clients are "legitimate sportsmen," members of the paramilitary Warrior Society can be spotted by their shopping lists, which feature heavy assault-type weaponry...the Warriors lean towards military-issue bullets. The weapons cradled by the Warriors behind the barricades in Oka include AK-47 assault weapons, AR-15 assault weapons, 9 mm hand-guns, shotguns, and .30-06 rifles. There are rumours [that] the Mohawks' weaponry includes claymore mines, which send out hundreds of steel shards when tripped. Semi-automatic AK-47 assault weapons and semiautomatic .30-06 hunting rifles for example can be legally purchased in Canada.55

The Globe and Mail's Jeffrey Simpson toed the government line in his August 29 column titled, "The trouble with using the military is that force has unintended results," in which he stated, "The Warriors are menacing, calculating people who have, by whatever means, armed themselves with weapons that should be possessed only by civil authorities. They are political racketeers who threaten

civil order." The Warriors never threatened civil order; they manned a barricade. Also, if the Warriors did not possess weapons, one would have to wonder what would have happened on July 11.

Even Geoffrey York, who covered the crisis for the Globe and Mail from behind the barricades, often slighted the Warriors in his columns. York described the Warriors as "militant and defiant." He said they took advantage of the presence of the media by telling stories of guerrilla warfare in the cities and cutting off electrical power across the country. "Journalists soon discover that none of these stories are true."54 Despite the fact that the stories were not true, both of the cases mentioned in York's article were reported as "news" in the media. The Gazette reported the statements made by the Soldier of Fortune editor, "an expert on these matters," that the Warriors planned on guerrilla warfare in the cities. Also, the SQ used the power outage story as a pretext for obtaining the court injunction to cut off the journalists' cellular phones, which "were in the control of criminals."

On September 26, the day the Mohawks "disengaged," the Warriors issued a statement to the media prior to leaving the treatment centre. Reported only in brief quotes by the Globe and Mail but in its entirety in the Ottawa Citizen, part of the statement read:

The Mohawk people and their allies are leaving the Treatment Centre today to go home to continue the struggle for the land. We are leaving to tell the real story of the governments of Quebec and Canada not willing to negotiate a fair and just deal, not the story that has been portrayed by both those governments and the media. We are going home to continue work within our own nation, the

Confederacy, other Indian nations, Canada, the international level and the world. We came here to defend the Haudenosaunee position to defend the land, we have committed no crimes in defending our land. We are leaving here with heads held high with pride and dignity in having defended the land and the Haudenosaunee position. We have committed no crimes and if the governments of Canada and Quebec choose to process us as criminals within their laws, we are political prisoners not criminals.

The government did not see things the way the Mohawks did. Most of the fifty people in the Treatment Centre, including "hooting Warriors," were loaded on buses and brought to Farnham military base for processing. Instead of treating the Oka crisis as a valid social protest, the government came down with the full force of the law, a system alien to Mohawk culture. The Mohawks were prosecuted under a system which does not apply to them. They are a sovereign nation.

In sum, many of the comments, editorials, and regular news columns adopted the government's portrayal of the Warriors. The government's strategy was to portray the Warriors as a fringe group with no support from the native community. They were called a "criminal organization," "extremists," "terrorists," who were "not blessed" by the community of "peace loving" Mohawks. They were leading an "occupation." According to the editorials, the Warriors were a "despicable and intolerable" group of "guerrillas" who had "seized control" of the community creating "no go areas" where "criminal activity" could flourish. The news columns said the Warriors were a "heavily armed gang," "terrorists," "criminals," a "paramilitary group" who had "hijacked negotiations." They were called a "menacing, calculating people," an "occupying force." As is evidenced in the reporting, the government's concerted effort to undermine the Warriors was adopted by the press. The press were "stenographers."
III(iii). The Land, the Mohawk People and Native Leaders

In an unusually sensitive commentary, Gazette columnist Albert Nerenberg wrote, "Their [the Mohawks'] fight for a homeland in Quebec has been widely portrayed as the mania of an irrational people under the control of a terrorist organization." Even the Prime Minister said, "I believe that our native peoples, over decades and centuries, have not been well-treated by Canada and by Canadians." However, many columnists' commentaries were not so insightful. Marjorie Nichols of the Ottawa Citizen wrote in a July 24 column titled, "Media managers to blame for phoney native crisis," that the whole issue was a "phoney native crisis" engineered by "professional native agitators." She commented.

This country may have blights upon its human rights landscape but it certainly doesn't have to apologize for any lack of humanity or generosity in the treatment of its native citizens.

The Mohawk people and native leaders tried to obtain justice for their people. "They just wanted their land."  

Each of following sections, the land, the Mohawk people, and native leaders, will be discussed by first exposing the government's strategy and how, if possible, it was manifested in the editorials, opinion columns, and news stories.

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57 Albert Nerenberg, "Meet 5 funny kids from Kanesatake, which the army will invade," Montreal Gazette, August 28, 1990.


59 Winter, Common Cents, p.252.
The latest "Okakrisis" started over the proposed golf course expansion onto land held sacred by the Mohawks.\textsuperscript{11} As outlined in the previous chapter, the Mohawks of Kanesatake have a sound claim to the land yet their claims had been rejected many times by federal governments and courts. As far as the government was concerned, the Mohawks did not have a solid claim to the land. Mulroney said that his government had purchased the disputed land, "despite the fact that they were twice found by the courts not to have any historic title to the land."\textsuperscript{11}

Instead of explaining the Mohawks' claim, the newspapers adopted the official version of the land claim in their stories. As pointed out by the \textit{Gazette}, "the municipality of Oka owns it [the land] and wants to use the land to extend a golf course."\textsuperscript{12} As far as Oka mayor Jean Ouellette was concerned, the land belonged to the town. He dismissed the Mohawks' claim over and over again saying, "The Indians claim the land belongs to them, but they have to prove it...You could claim your grandfather owned Place Ville Marie if you wanted."\textsuperscript{13} The Mohawks, according to the \textit{Globe and Mail}, have "until now...tolerated" the golf course even though it surrounds a native burial ground.\textsuperscript{14}

The Mohawks' claim to the land was inadequately explained in most passages contained in the four newspapers. With the exception of a few articles,

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., p.209.
\textsuperscript{12} Cited in Winter, \textit{Common Cents}, p.225.
\textsuperscript{13} Picard. "Armed Mohawks..."
the history surrounding the Mohawks' claim was described as, "...the land was
wrongfully taken from the band years ago by the Seminary of St. Sulpice," or more
often just as "...Oka...is trying to expand a nine-hole golf course on 22 hectares
of land the Mohawks claim."\(^{15}\)

Although the July 11 storming of the barricades resulted in the death of a
provincial policeman and the disruption of people's lives, the Oka town council
refused to acknowledge that their plans for the golf course were in bad judgement.
When the federal government began purchasing the disputed land, the Oka town
council had "thrown in the towel" because Mohawks "have a gun to our heads."
not because the town recognized native title to the woods. Indian Affairs Minister
Tom Siddon blamed the town of Oka for the trouble in the first place. He said.

I trust that they will realize that the issue which triggered this
problem was a community which chose to develop a golf course on
privately owned land. in the face of very strong representations
about the cultural and historical significance of these lands to the
Mohawk people.\(^{16}\)

\(^{15}\) The first description was from Hamilton, "Battle heats...; and the second
quote was from Andre Picard and Patricia Poirier, "Ottawa asked to resolve
Montreal Gazette contained a good history of the Mohawk land claim at Oka by
Peggy Curran, called "Oka dispute reaches into mists of Canada's history." In a
September 2 article in the Ottawa Citizen, "Army sweeps in to bring blockade to
dramatic end," the standard history used to describe the crisis to date read, "It
was the Oka town council's decision to expand the golf course onto traditional
Mohawk land which prompted the band to erect its initial barricade."

\(^{16}\) Peter Kuitenbrouwer and Peggy Curran, "Native guns force Oka to throw in
Gazette interview by Norris and Wills, "Reopening Mohawk land-claims has
nothing to do with Warriors: Siddon," Siddon said the promise the federal
government made to reopen land-claim talks with the Mohawks of Kanesatake had
"nothing to do" with the presence of the Warriors. He said this plan "does nothing
more than reiterate a series of commitments it made as long as three years before
the armed standoff began..." He said his government committed itself to acquiring
the land in May 1990 and three years prior to the crisis the government expressed
Yet, Siddon's government, and those before it, had rejected the "historical significance" of the Mohawk claim. The town, according to the Gazette, believed their "beautiful project" was wrecked by "know-nothing environmentalists and land-grabbing Mohawks." Oka town councillor Rejean Larocque said, "We were going to put in a golf course, not a tire factory." However, the point is that it did not matter what the town council decided to build on the land. The land was Mohawk land. A spokesperson for the golf club said, "The famous pine grove and the forest, their value is extremely exaggerated. The forest is a swamp. You can't walk in it." Although the explanation was only attributed to a "historian," the Gazette said.

What Phaneuf [spokesperson for the golf club] calls a swamp a Quebec historian calls one of the oldest forests planted by man in Quebec. Mainly planted by natives, the forest dates back to 1886, the year after a major landslide swept into the village. It is the forest, some Quebec environmental experts say, that prevents Oka's sandy base from shifting. But the town council continues to dismiss environmentalists as a tiny group of outsiders with no knowledge of the area.67

The settlement of the land issue "upstaged" the Constitutional crisis as a top priority of the federal government. Yet like the environmentalists, the Mohawks' claim to the land was portrayed as a nuisance.

According to the government's view, the Mohawks were negotiating in bad faith. The Mohawks were often slighted in the coverage of the Oka crisis. The Mohawks were characterized as hampering the negotiating process.⁶⁸ According to a Gazette editorial, "...a changing cast of Mohawk negotiators introduced new issues from day to day..." and made it impossible for a settlement of the land issue."⁶⁹ A commentary made by Gazette columnist Don Macpherson said that the fact that the Mohawks submitted a list of 54 negotiators gave the appearance that they were "in no hurry to get down to serious negotiations..."⁷⁰ The news columns said that during the negotiations, "interesting speeches" were made that "had nothing to do with the removal of the barricades."⁷¹ The Mohawks even submitted a document, "which consisted of a 15-foot-long computer printout," in which they made several demands which were described as "bizarre" by the Prime Minister.⁷²

In order to explain their history, their treaties, and their land claims, the Mohawks brought everyone they felt they needed to the negotiations. Most of the 54 people were simply observers who would be called to the negotiating table if their expertise was required. But if they needed to arrive at a consensus on a

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⁶⁸ The issue of negotiating will be discussed in more detail under Section III.i. - Bias through the Source of the News.
⁷⁰ Don Macpherson, "Bourassa Liberals showing the strain," Montreal Gazette, August 18, 1990.
government proposal, the Mohawks would draw on the advice of everyone present. In reality, the limited manoeuvrability of the government negotiators hampered the negotiating process. Provincial negotiator Alexander Paterson had only one mandate: to get the barricades down. The federal negotiator Bernard Roy was permitted to discuss the land issues but he had to follow the principles of the "framework agreement" which had never been accepted by the Mohawks.73 Instead of expanding their mandate, the government opted for the policy of brinkmanship in which the army increased the pressure on the Mohawks in order that the Mohawks would make concessions at the bargaining table.

As far as the government was concerned, there was no need for the barricades, the guns, the Warriors. As long as the Mohawks continued to maintain any of these things, they were engaged in criminal activity. According to the Globe and Mail, the Oka crisis "followed the pattern of other violent incidents involving natives affirming their right to self-government."74 Their tone was "defiant." They had to deny that they were "using children as a shield at the barricades against a potential assault." They had to answer questions on July 14 regarding immunity for the shooting of Corporal Lemay, even before the autopsy results had been made public. Even their traditions were treated as strange. They

73 York & Pindera, People of the Pines, pp.300-302.
74 Picard, "Armed Mohawks..." This statement is not explained any further. In an article contained in the July 15 edition of the Globe and Mail (Rudy Platiel, "Violence not rising, natives say"), the chief of the Assembly of First Nations, Georges Erasmus, had to deny that Oka is another in a series of violent actions by natives.

The notion of native self-government is now broadly accepted as illustrated by the proposed amendment to the Canadian Constitution, the Charlottetown Accord.
had "planted a bizarre, frightening mask atop a pole...Flesh-coloured, it had long strands of hair sticking out of it." No explanation was offered about the mask but "it stared down with a menacing air at Canadian Forces personnel." The masks are part of the "hattui" ceremonies, in which the spirits of false face masks carved from century-old living trees are invoked for the protection of those living behind the barricade.76

Yet the portrayal of the Mohawks as "irrational" was most evident in a commentary by the Globe and Mail's Jeffrey Simpson. In the August 29 article, Simpson wrote:

The use of military force will likely radicalize still further the Mohawks and native society generally, a radicalization that could lead to random or systematic acts of violence. Even if such terrorist activities do not occur, the political radicalization produced by the use of military force will further poison the already sour relations between white society and native society. Governments may hope that the use of force will straighten out the natives' confusion over ends and means by demonstrating that the means of civil disobedience and law-breaking, which the Warriors' actions represent, are bound to fail to achieve their ends. Comforting as it may be to believe that the Warriors' own methods will turn many natives against them, as indeed they should have done, any repugnance directed at their methods will be subsumed in the deepening of the alienation so many natives already feel. They may soon perceive the attack on the Warriors as a symbolic attack on natives generally.77 [Emphasis added].

However, the natives were not confused. The "Oka crisis" struck a deep chord of sympathy in thousands of aboriginal people, reaching across the country and down to Mexico.78 Because, as pointed out by the Globe and Mail's Andre

76 York & Pindera, People of the Pines, p.215.
77 Simpson, "The trouble..."
78 Winter, Common Cents, p.215.
Picard. "natives feel they have nothing to lose." any attack could result in repercussions. "Shut out of the political process, natives helped scuttle the Meech Lake accord" and, as implied by the article, they could scuttle some process again."

III.iii(c). Native Leaders

Native leaders also did not fare so well in the coverage. Mohawk leaders Ellen Gabriel and Joe Norton who supported the Warriors were centred out for insulting comments. When Gabriel, who according to Swain was "supplanted by the Warriors," was giving a statement for the press, she was described as "reading from a prepared statement." "Reading from a prepared statement..." appeared in reference to Gabriel on more than one occasion." In such events as the government and army press conferences, it was obvious that the officials were also "reading from a prepared statement," however, this was never said. By using this phrase to describe Gabriel, the press gave the impression that she is not smart enough to carry on a press conference without the words in front of her. Her image of a proud, confident Mohawk was diminished. Kahnawake's Grand Chief Joe Norton, who supported the Warriors and was a member of the negotiating team, was implicitly questioned in a Gazette article. After "warning" that the relationship between Canada and its native peoples must change, the Gazette

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said. "Norton, saying he spoke 'on behalf of the Mohawk negotiating team'..."\(^{\text{1}}\) [Emphasis added].

However, it was the "moderate" native leaders, such as Liberal MP Ethel Blondin and Manitoba MLA Elijah Harper, who received the most criticism. The government tried to persuade these "moderate" leaders to condemn the actions of the Warriors. Whenever Harper was approached for a comment on the Oka crisis, he was described as "...the Cree-Ojibwa member of the Manitoba Legislature who prevented ratification of the Meech Lake constitutional accord in that province..."\(^{\text{2}}\) Ethel Blondin, a Dene Indian MP from the Northwest Territories, was the subject of criticism by the Gazette’s William Johnson adopted the government’s strategy in a September 26 commentary. He wrote.

...because she did not clearly disassociate herself from violence, because she did not affirm the sovereignty of Canada, she also diminished her credibility... By her silence about the use of violence, Blondin seemed to condone what the Warriors are doing.\(^{\text{3}}\)

\(^{\text{1}}\) Peter Kuitenbrouwer. "Don't expect quick resolution: Norton," Montreal Gazette, August 18, 1990. Besides questioning Norton's authority, this passage also emphasized the divisions in the Mohawk community.

\(^{\text{2}}\) Rudy Platiel. "Indians denounce call for army action," Globe and Mail, August 29, 1990, p.A4. As a side note, a commentary made by J. Patrick O'Callaghan, "No more tribal blackmail," appeared in the September 4, 1990 edition of the Globe and Mail. In the article he took aim at Harper for his role in defeating the Meech Lake accord. He wrote, "When provinces representing 92 per cent of the population of Canada endorse the Meech Lake accord, the last hope of preserving a united Canada, one Indian throws the agonizing process of 123 years of nation-building out the window. Anywhere else he would be classified as a traitor; in Canada, he becomes a folk hero." Even in spite of his last sentence, O'Callaghan failed to realize that maybe something was wrong with the accord but instead he toed the government line of blaming the downfall of the accord on Harper and Newfoundland premier Clyde Wells.

\(^{\text{3}}\) William Johnson, "Opposition parties fail to rise to occasion in Oka debate," Montreal Gazette, September 26, 1990, p.B3. The federal government tried to persuade Blondin, Georges Erasmus, and other "moderate" leaders to criticize the Warriors and the armed blockade at Oka. The strategy did not work. York &
Again adopted in a September 9 editorial, "Native leaders should lead," in the 
Montreal Gazette said.

One of the saddest things about this summer's Mohawk showdown...is the absence of credible native leadership...They 
native leaders should do as the premier suggests and urge the 
Mohawk Warriors holding out at Oka to lay down their arms and put 
themselves in the custody of the Canadian army. The pity is that 
most native leaders have been encouraging the gunmen at Oka, 
instead of resolutely condemning their resort to lawlessness.

However, what the federal government and the media seemed to miss, or 
at least ignored, was the struggle that Oka represented."4 The government's 
strategy against the native leaders backfired. Chief Konrad Siout, leader of the 
Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador, was quoted in a July 21 article 
in the Globe and Mail as saying, "The First Nations are coming together to say 
'Enough is enough.' And right now we feel we have the full support of the 
world."5 Ethel Blondin eloquently summed up what Oka represented. She said. 
"I could never denounce the warriors. They symbolize something I believe in - the 
struggle to defend our land and our rights."6

III.(iii). The Army

As discussed in Chapter Two, the journalists who gathered to evaluate their 
coverage of the Oka crisis concluded that the army emerged with a better image

Pindera, People of the Pines, p.272.

4 For an example of the treatment of native leaders by television, see the 
treatment of Vice-Chief Bill Wilson by CBC's Newsworld in Winter, Common Cents. 
pp.227-240.


6 York & Pindera, People of the Pines, p.274.
than the SQ because the army better accommodated the media. However, what
the army had, that the SQ lacked, was an organized PR campaign.

III.iii(b) The Army’s PR Strategy

"Experts" in the field of public relations praised the army’s campaign during
the Oka crisis. Christopher Cushing of the Canadian Institute for Strategic
Studies said the army had undertook a massive "public education campaign"
to explain subtly that their presence was necessary because the Warriors were a
real threat to public security.\textsuperscript{87} The army had what army strategist Jean-Claude
Cloutier called "a script on the whole Mohawk crisis...We wrote down a scenario
of exactly what we wanted to happen when the army moved into Oka and
Kahnawake and we followed the script exactly." Cloutier said "the script" included
a series of advanced press releases for the media and countless briefings for army
spokesmen.\textsuperscript{88} Major Richard Larouche, one of the army’s key spokesmen during
the crisis, said the army’s campaign kept hammering away at three central
themes: one, the soldiers wouldn’t fire first at the Warriors; two, the army would
fire back with force if fired upon; and three, the army was only in the area at the
invitation of the Quebec government and would leave immediately when asked.\textsuperscript{89}

\textsuperscript{87} Andre Picard, "Army-Mohawk strife a public relations war." Globe and Mail.

\textsuperscript{88} Taken from CP, "Army 'won Oka media war,'" Calgary Herald, October 25,
1990. p.A5 and Globe and Mail, "Role of public relations at Oka brought army to

The army's PR machine prepared a total of 45 press releases, briefed army
spokespersons in the field and organized 10 press conferences. Doni Eve, "The

\textsuperscript{89} CP, "Army 'won...."
In contrast, the Sûreté du Québec came under heavy criticism for their lack of cooperation with the media. The SQ did not have an organized PR campaign.

In regard to the media, Larouche said the media were hungry for information and the army simply complied by providing news. According to the "experts," the only public relations fiascos committed by the army occurred when troops showed a lack of discipline. However, these incidents were blamed on the presence of the media. On September 6, Lieutenant-Colonel Pierre Daigle ordered journalists, on the army side of the barricades, to move back several hundred metres to the initial site of the roadblock. The Gazette quoted Daigle saying, "the journalists were simply getting in the way;" however, the Globe and Mail said that Daigle moved the reporters because they were "providing a forum for media shows." such as the stare-downs between the soldiers and Warriors." In fact. Cushing said the ideal situation would have been if the media were not behind the barricades, so the army adopted a strategy of making it tough for the journalists left inside the encampment. On September 17, the army executed a court injunction obtained by the SQ to have the cellular phones of the journalists cut off because the phones were in "the control of criminals." The Globe and Mail's Geoffrey York, who was behind the barricades with the Warriors at this point, wrote in an article not on the front page.

...the Canadian Forces took extraordinary steps to suppress the flow of news from the embattled Mohawk Warrior headquarters near Oka...The army and the Quebec police obtained a court injunction...to authorize the cutoff of the cellular telephones, which are the

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last remaining link between the Mohawks and the outside world. Army spokesmen said the cutoff was designed to get the journalists to leave and force the Mohawks to begin negotiations on a direct hotline to the army. "It's just to remove all distractions," Major Remi Landry said. The injunction was granted without any opportunity for the media to respond. The army is preventing supplies from reaching journalists and no film or videotape is allowed out of the compound. The army has told journalists to use the army hotline if they want to request food. But the journalists have refused, saying it would leave them dependent on the army and vulnerable to military controls. Instead, they are planning to purchase food from the Mohawks. The army is still permitting semi-regular shipments of food to the Mohawks. [Emphasis added].

York was upset about the action, an important one. Jack Todd took exception to this action by the army, not because it suppressed the news but because the media had been good to the army. He could not understand why the army would treat its "best friend" this way. After explaining the polite, co-operative actions by the army, he wrote in his Gazette column:

We are suspicious of the military in this country...The media has been, by and large, all but fawning over the army's performance. Why has Roy suddenly decided that we're not welcome to report the news? Not only do we have business inside that perimeter, journalists have a right and duty to be there - even if we don't want to be there, even if it's dangerous, which it is. [Emphasis added].

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91 Geoffrey York, "Oka talks slow as news blocked," Globe and Mail, September 17, 1990, p.A3. Despite the seriousness of the action, this story was placed on the inside pages of the Globe and Mail. According to Cirino's thesis, the placement of a story in the newspaper assigns that story a significance level. The mere appearance of a story on the back pages, for example, persuades the reader that the story is insignificant. Cirino, Don't Blame the People, p.153.

92 Jack Todd, "Military coup?" Montreal Gazette, September 17, 1990, p.A3. Todd said the situation was dangerous and that the journalists were taking a risk being there covering the story. Presenting the Warriors as a serious threat to the safety of those in the area was part of the army's PR campaign. York and Pindera point out that during the September 15 organized tour for the journalists, they were ordered to wear bullet-proof vests as if to avoid the danger of random shooting by the Mohawks. York & Pindera, People of the Pines, p.380.
Besides withholding food, the army also would not allow the journalists inside the Treatment Centre to receive supplies such as film. During the organized tour, the journalists behind the barricade with the Mohawks, including Geoffrey York, resorted to tossing their films across the highway to their counterparts. The soldiers scuffled with the journalists and seized some of the film.

III.(iii)b. Editorials

As discussed earlier in this section, the army had a "script" for their campaign which included the three themes: the army would not fire first, it would respond if fired upon, and that the army was there at the invitation of the Quebec government. When the army was asked to intervene in mid-August, their mandate was set. The army said it would "act peaceably," contact the natives before any movements, and would assist the Mohawks in dismantling the barricades after the Mohawks decide to remove them. As outlined by Lt.-Gen. Kent Foster the army's "aim is to allow the police to have some respite from the long time they've been there, and to allow us to get the barricades down and open up one side of the situation and to allow a greater freedom of movement."[93]

The media echoed the army's statements in their editorials. A Gazette editorial on August 29. "Army operation can succeed." stated that.

The army's limited and essential assignment is to remove blockades on public thoroughfares and neutralize the Mohawk Warriors who have ruled by the gun for the past seven weeks. The only thing that could change the operation from a non-violent to a violent one is armed resistance by the Warriors. [Emphasis added].

On the same day, Jeffrey Simpson of the Globe and Mail wrote that "...the soldiers will be exposed to dangers they should not reasonably be expected to face." The "dangers" the soldiers would be exposed to were outlined in what Christopher Cushing said was the "best example" of the "public education campaign" against the Warriors.

III.iii.iii. News Reflections

On August 28 in conjunction with the announcement of their plans, the army released a video prepared by the Armed Forces detailing the weapons allegedly owned by the Warriors. Although the article said the video was "released to put across the army's view of the military situation...," the Globe and Mail listed the weapons the army said the Warriors had. The article said,

Among the weapons the army video said the Mohawks have were a modified version of the Israeli-designed Uzi submachine gun, various kinds of shotguns and hunting rifles, fragmentation grenades, dynamite and gasoline bombs. But the army suspects the Mohawks may also have acquired a .50-calibre machine gun and M-72 anti-tank guns, which could destroy the lightly protected armoured personnel carriers that are the army's main troop-moving equipment. The production was clearly intended to show the Mohawks - and anybody else - that the army has enough troops and equipment to overwhelm the Warriors. But the video also makes several pitches for a peaceful settlement, noting that troops will not fire first and will use their weapons only in self-defence.  

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94 Simpson. "The trouble..."

95 Hugh Winsor, "Defence video parades weaponry." Globe and Mail, August 29, 1990, p.A4. John Thompson of the Mackenzie Institute, a right-wing think-tank, said the army's video was designed to point out the firepower of the Warriors which has not been reported because, "The Mohawks are very good at manipulation and fairly good at propaganda..." He went on to say that the army's purpose is "aimed as much at dividing the Mohawks as at appealing to the Canadian public." Daniel Drolet. "War of words," Ottawa Citizen, August 29, 1990, p.A5.
On August 27, the mandate of the army changed. Calling the army "the court of last resort," Brig.-Gen. Armand Roy said the army "will not cease [the] overall or local operations until armed Mohawks and the Warriors lay down their weapons and surrender in front of the barricades..." The army could no longer guarantee that they would announce the troop movements prior to moving. In fact, when the army surrounded the remaining Mohawks in the Treatment Centre on September 1, the fax announcing the troop movement arrived some two hours late in the Treatment Centre.

Unlike the SQ, the army had a positive image. The army allowed food, medicine, legal and spiritual advisors, and international observers to pass unimpeded. In a very short article on the inside pages of the Globe and Mail on

In contrast, Mohawk negotiator Joe Deom said the video parading the Warriors' weapons was "...figments of the imagination. I can't tell you what we do have, but we don't have rocket launchers and anti-tank weaponry." He said the military's overestimation of Warrior firepower may be nothing more than a psychological ploy to justify an armed assault to the Canadian public. MacLeod, "Mohawks defy..."


97 Prior to August 27, the army had said it would provide advance notice to the Mohawks regarding any troop movements. About twelve days earlier, the International Federation of Human Rights received a complaint by the Mohawks stating that a six-man camouflage team of soldiers had entered the woods of Kanesatake. Eddie Collister and Irvin Block, "680 more soldiers moved in from New Brunswick." Montreal Gazette, August 17, 1990, p.A4. In keeping with Parenti's thesis that if officials are slighted in an article they are granted adequate space to respond, the army was given the last word to deny the allegation.

98 Michael Orsini, "Tanks beat fax to Mohawk school." Montreal Gazette, September 2, 1990, p.A5. None of the three other papers reported this fact. An ironic note to this story was that Kahnawake Chief Billy Two Rivers said after the army had announced its plans on August 27 that he did not trust the army's promise. He said, "They will probably honour [their commitment to give notice] but that could mean anything from 48 hours to one minute." Susan Bell, "It'll be a massacre if army moves in: Mohawk." Montreal Gazette, August 28, 1990, pp.A1 & A5.
September 2, a United Church minister, Rev. Hoyle, said the police and the army would not allow food and medical supplies to cross the barricades. He said that they had to negotiate with the army for 20 loaves of bread.\textsuperscript{99} When civil-rights leader Jesse Jackson tried to visit the Mohawks held up in the Treatment Centre, he was denied entry by the army. Instead of criticizing the move, Jack Todd wrote in his September 25 column, that the scene of the army turning back the civil-rights activist was "an unfortunate distortion" which clashed with the otherwise stately image of the Canadian army.\textsuperscript{100}

In contrast to the army, the Sûreté du Québec did not fare as well in the media, and deservedly so. The SQ did some stupid things during this crisis such as blocking food and beating Mohawks. The Sûreté also has a long and less than honourable reputation when it comes to busting up strikes and generally coming down heavy-handedly in support of the government.\textsuperscript{101} The army's arrival was praised by the Globe and Mail's André Picard because "The withdrawal of Sûreté du Québec police officers...removes a major irritant."\textsuperscript{102} The Gazette's Jack Todd


\textsuperscript{100} Jack Todd. "Publicity stunt." Montreal Gazette. September 25, 1990. p.A3. On his visit to Kanesatake, Rev. Jackson "suggested the Mohawks behind the barricades do not have access to legal and spiritual advisors." However Geoffrey York said, "In fact, the army allowed a Mohawk faithkeeper and a negotiator into the encampment..." Rev. Jackson "also claimed two people have been killed during the crisis." York said yes two people have been killed but Mr. Armstrong's death was due to heart trouble and not the rock-throwing. In fact, three people died during the crisis as York later points out in his book. He says in his book that Armstrong died "just a few days after he suffered the terror of the stone-throwing mob." In addition to Lemay, another elderly man in Oka died after being poisoned by tear gas after the July 11 raid.

\textsuperscript{101} The history of SQ violence against the Mohawks is outlined briefly in York & Pindera. People of the Pines. pp.27-28.

\textsuperscript{102} Picard. "Police pullout..."
suggested in his September 4 column. “Fear of revenge,” that the army should disarm the SQ. The army was said to be the only thing standing between the Mohawks and “the scowling head-knockers of the Sûreté du Québec.” In the end, the SQ blamed the English media for giving them a bad image.\textsuperscript{103} The Sûreté accused the anglophone media of “settling accounts with Quebec” because of “political motives” somehow connected with the Meech Lake accord.\textsuperscript{104} Yet when natives such as Chief Sioui said that the raid on the Mohawk barricades was somehow connected to a payback for Elijah Harper’s role in defeating the accord. Quebec officials dismissed the allegation as ludicrous.\textsuperscript{105} However, it was not only the English media which criticized the SQ for their handling of the crisis. Other opponents included the Quebec Human Rights Commission and even leaders of the Quebec nationalist movement, who said the Liberal government was criminalizing another valid social protest.\textsuperscript{106} Despite the criticism, the SQ stated, after the crisis was over, that they may have mishandled the public relations aspect of the crisis but the real deterrent to their success was the fact

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\textsuperscript{103} Although his research did not include a breakdown of SQ coverage, and his data might best be described as “sparse.” Osler’s content analysis may cast some light on this allegation. For example, two French language newspapers relied on 43 official and non-native sources in stories, compared to 14 native sources (including national leaders and others who were critical of the Warriors). This contrasts with the English press which gave the natives 32 mentions versus 20 official sources. As this thesis reveals the treatment of the Mohawks by the English press was bad, then one could assume that the French press was worse. Osler, News: The Evolution of Journalism in Canada, p.120.

\textsuperscript{104} York & Pinder, People of the Pines, p.414.


\textsuperscript{106} York & Pinder, People of the Pines, p.414.
that they did not possess enough "war equipment." The SQ seemed to learn nothing from the Oka crisis.\footnote{CP, "Police in Quebec admit Oka crisis badly mishandled," \textit{The Windsor Star}, February 21, 1991. The SQ also did not introduce any programs to teach their officers native tradition. The police also increased their presence around Kanesatake and Kahnawake throughout the remainder of 1990 and into 1991. According to recent articles in the \textit{Windsor Star}, the patrols continue around Kanesatake and Kahnawake. Some of incidents are described in York & Pindera, \textit{People of the Pines}, pp.405-406.}

The media portrayal of the SQ was deserved: however, the army was less than perfect, yet one would never know this from the media coverage. The army did block food, observers, etc. The army did practice psychological warfare against the Mohawks. The army did break its promise of advance notice. And finally, the army did cross over the lines and beat a Warrior. Instead of exposing these facts, the media’s reporting of the army gave the image of disciplined soldiers.

\textbf{III.(iv). The White Protestors}

Although there was no organized campaign in respect to the white protesters, the government paid more attention to them than the natives. These people more closely reflected the status quo - they were white and French - and therefore, they received compensation.

\textbf{III.(iv)a. Editorial and News Reflections}

Riots by the white residents of the surrounding towns near Kanesatake and Kahnawake occurred throughout the 78-day standoff. Because their route to Montreal was blocked, these people vented their "frustration" on natives, police.
and journalists. The Gazette reported the Ku Klux Klan had infiltrated the protest movements in Châteauguay. The presence of the KKK stirred up Quebec nationalist fervour. One flyer distributed at the demonstrations by the racist group read:

For more than 400 years we have been masters here. We make up the demographic majority. So are we going to be led by the country's cultural minority?...We greatly respect aboriginal people but we will not tolerate their use of a supposed "historical excuse" to squeeze from us our money and our territories."

The Globe and Mail described the participants in one of the most violent riots on August 13 as young and "biker" type. The article said.

The slogan-shouting crowd included about 100 youngsters...One woman, dressed in motorcycle helmet and black leather jacket and brandishing a large hunting knife, walked to the police lines, waved the knife in the air and shrieked an imitation of an Indian war whoop. The woman was among those taken away for questioning. The crowd of rock-throwing youths pulled back, screaming and yelling. [Emphasis added].

Yet the most prevalent description of the non-native protestors was summarized by Yvon Poitras on August 13, the leader of Solidarité Châteauguay and a former SQ officer. "These residents are extremely frustrated and I'm afraid they cannot be controlled."

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111 Christina Coraggio, "25 arrested by RCMP at Châteauguay protest." Montreal Gazette. August 14, 1990. pp.A1 & A2. [Emphasis added]. Solidarité Châteauguay was a pressure group intended to mobilize the people of Châteauguay in a more organized campaign. Châteauguay, a South Shore suburb of Montreal, was the town most affected by the Mercier Bridge blockade.
Three days after the raid on the Kanaseatake barricades and after the blockade of the Mercier Bridge, the Montreal Gazette described a day-time incident:

_Frustrated_ by the Mohawks' blockade of the Mercier Bridge, hundreds of _angry_ white residents milled around...outside the Kahnawake Indian reserve...ready to attack anyone who looked like a native. The police had to protect a teenage girl...One resident said, "We can't go there, so they have no business coming here. If we'd caught her she would have got a good beating." Hearing a rumour that two Mohawk women were inside the supermarket buying groceries to take back to the reserve - with police permission - the crowd moved in. While the women escaped by the back-door, two _young_ white men showed up in army fatigues, and were mistaken for Mohawks, and chased and beaten...One woman said "Give (the Mohawks) a case of beer and they'll get out." [Emphasis added].

The group even tried to stop an ambulance from entering the reserve to take a pregnant woman to the hospital. The Globe and Mail reported that "between 200 and 500 people were involved" in this instance, which is quite a gap in judging crowd size. As a result of the supermarket clash, "the police said they would no longer allow the Kahnawake residents to leave the reserve except in case of emergency." Because of the actions of the non-natives, the Mohawks were punished. The Globe and Mail did not criticize this statement by the police nor did the newspaper question the actions of these people.112

In late August, the "residents of Châteauguay" again made it very difficult for the Mohawks of Kahnawake to leave the reserve. This description is taken from the Globe and Mail:

113 Picard and Potier. "Ottawa asked..."
A crowd of about 500 people hurled rocks and construction materials at a convoy of cars carrying Mohawk families out of the Kahnawake Reserve near the Mercier Bridge. "It was a rain of rocks, it was terrible. Those cars were full of old folks. It was really ugly," police said. None of the people - many of whom were women, children, and seniors... - appeared to be seriously injured, police said. The 60 cars in the Mohawk convoy had cleared police checkpoints but were stopped by a mob at the exit to the bridge. The crowd, most of them young men, refused to budge despite pleas from a high-ranking provincial police officer. Police and Royal Canadian Mounted Police officers then formed a wedge to ease the cars through, but about two dozen people ran up a large mound of earth, picked up stones the size of softballs and threw them at the Mohawks' cars from a distance of about 15 metres...[The demonstrators would not let men out of the reserve because "it was Mohawk men who started this trouble."114 [Emphasis added].

Again, the actions of this 'young crowd' were justified. They were simply referred to as "demonstrators" in the stories and not hooligans.

The day after, the Montreal Gazette quoted one rock-thrower as saying, "We told them (what would happen if they didn't honour our request) and they ignored us. It was only rocks that we threw. No one got hurt."115 Actually, at least six Mohawks were hurt. One man died because of the stress of the incident.116

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114 CP. "Mercier Bridge mob stones convoy of fleeing Mohawks," Globe and Mail, August 29, 1990, p.A4. In the case of three of the four newspapers, this story did not appear on the front page. The Montreal Gazette, "Mob hurl rocks at Mohawk cars," started the article on the front page but the article first discussed the reaction of school parents not wanting natives in the school. The Winnipeg Free Press had a picture related to the event on the front page but the story appeared on page 42. "Mob hurl rocks at fleeing Mohawk families." The Ottawa Citizen was the only paper to place the whole story on the front page, although it was very small and not the main headline. "Mob hurl rocks at fleeing natives."


116 When describing the death of Mohawk Joe Armstrong both the Gazette and the Globe and Mail said he was not physically injured during the incident but "the stress of the incident is said to have led to a deterioration in what was Mr. Armstrong's already precarious health."

Not that his death was any less tragic but Cpl. Lemay was survived by "his wife Lorraine and three-year-old daughter Catherine." Citizen News Services.
LaSalle city councillor, Alain Chenier, said, "Citizens had every right to stone their cars...Indians get too much protection from the law." Playing down this crime, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney said, "Clearly it's a tiny minority of people who are acting this way." He continued, "...it is absolutely disgraceful that innocent people would be abused and mistreated in this way. Racism at any time, under any circumstance is an evil." Yet, the racism that the Mohawks had experienced for 300 years goes unmentioned. That same day the Gazette editorial, "No amnesty for stone-throwers," mildly condemned the actions of the rock-throwers, not because their actions warranted condemnation, but because they stoned cars carrying Mohawks "fleeing a community besieged by their own extremists." They were "refugees."

Because "Châteauguay residents have been especially frustrated by long detours they need to take because of blockades on the Mercier Bridge." the Quebec government announced on August 16 that it was taking steps to accelerate construction of the Highway 30 extension. As reported by Tara Patel and Alexander Norris of the Gazette, "A special law will be passed so that road construction can begin without the required public hearings on the environmental impact of the construction." Instead of settling the issue with the Mohawks, the extension of Highway 30 would cost the government an estimated $10 million


116 Orsini and Heinrich. "Police promised..."

but it "would ease the headaches of South Shore commuters inconvenienced by
the Mohawk blockade." Geoffrey York and Andre Picard reported that:

Quebec has already started a free commuter train service, and
promised to pave over ice barriers to create a temporary bridge over
the river to ease congestion that has added up to three hours to travelling time from the South Shore.\textsuperscript{120}

In addition to the commuter trains and road extensions, the Quebec government
compensated South Shore residents inconvenienced by the blockade.\textsuperscript{121} In the
end, the Quebec government spent $13.5 million on the highway extension and
$23.5 million in compensation to homeowners and businesspeople whose lives
were disrupted by the crisis.\textsuperscript{122}

On August 25, "angry residents armed with metal clubs and baseball bats"
prevented the International Human Rights Federation from entering the
Kahnawake reserve.\textsuperscript{123} Again the actions of these hooligans was justified
because they were "angry." In the Gazette's story on the incident, the paper stated
that the "International Federation of Human Rights complained that white mobs
had attacked them..." Their view of the incident was not taken as fact but belittled
by saying they were just complaining.\textsuperscript{124}

\textsuperscript{120} York and Picard. "Army to relieve...

\textsuperscript{121} York & Pindera. People of the Pines. p.405.

\textsuperscript{122} The government spent $5.28 million for the disputed land at Kanesatake,
land which still has not been turned over to the Mohawks. York & Pindera. People
of the Pines. p.411. In total, the federal and Quebec governments spent about
$235 million for police, soldiers, and compensation to residents and businesses.
Picard, "Hurdles remain..." These figures do not include the court costs which
accumulated over 1992.

\textsuperscript{123} Patricia Poirier. "Mohawks prepared for talks to resume." Globe and Mail,

\textsuperscript{124} Kate Dunn. "International observers blocked by mob." Montreal Gazette,
August 27, 1990. [Emphasis added].
In Oka on July 26, the Gazette reported that:

An angry crowd of Oka residents vented their frustration over the 17-day siege of their town by marching to police barricades carrying signs that refer to Quebec’s Native Affairs Minister as “Mohawk Grand Chief.” Several residents fear that the retreat of the Sûreté will lay the town open to vicious reprisals from the Warriors, the armed faction manning the native barriers. Angry protesters turned on journalists accusing them of supporting natives and ignoring Oka’s white residents. “The only thing I want to know is how to become an Indian so I can have the same kinds of advantages,” said one man who wouldn’t give his name. In a speech before the crowd, Guy Dubé, the vice-president of Oka’s resident group, called on Ciaccia to resign. “He has been on the natives’ side since the beginning. He is ready to give everything [in Oka] just to open the Mercier bridge.”125 [Emphasis added].

The allegations made against John Ciaccia were not challenged anywhere in the article. Although the media was present to cover this incident and many others, the protesters accused the journalists of favouring the natives while ignoring them. “Flak” was at work again. In addition, there was no challenge to the statement about the Warriors. They were described as an “armed faction,” corresponding to the government’s PR campaign. Furthermore, the Warriors did not have any intention of taking over Oka. They were there to defend the Pines.

However, even when the protesters were quiet they made the news. As reported by the Gazette on August 20, Châteauguay had “quite a turn of events from the previous 10 days. when local street gangs pelted police with everything from Molotov cocktails to rocks to supermarket vegetable produce.” Again, the actions of the Châteauguay protesters were attributed to a minority of extremists in “local street gangs.” On the day the army arrived, Châteauguay was described as follows:

There was, in fact, a calm in some respects even festive atmosphere around the Châteauguay barricade yesterday. Sûreté officers were in an uncommonly elated mood as they talked and joked with some 100 residents who lined the barricade to take pictures, shake hands and say goodbye.  

And again on August 27, some 2,000 "residents of Châteauguay" waited "in anticipation of any move by the army." They came with cameras and lawn chairs to "see some fun." This Gazette article described this as if it was a parade or some such event. It seemed quite warped that the "residents of Châteauguay" would like to have seen the army move in on the Mohawks yet it was not portrayed that way. With the arrival of the army, which the people of Châteauguay wanted, the "Oka show" had begun.

III.i. Bias through the Source of the News

When Cirino discusses this form of bias, he limits himself to a discussion of the source as wire service or the paper's own reporter. Although this can reveal some important limitations in the news, I am taking this discussion further to include the actual source of the story as Ericson et al. and Lee & Solomon use. For example, did the police, army, a Mohawk spokesperson, or a government official provide the account of the event and if a particular party was slighted in the report were they given a chance to respond?

Journalistic objectivity requires the presentation of both sides. Even though "both sides" may be in a story, they often are not given equal space.

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positioning, or framing, resulting in unbalanced treatment. Sometimes the rule of "both sides" is temporarily forgotten due to space limitations, the pressure of deadlines, and careless reporting, but more often because of the political bias that dominates news production. Official positions are granted coverage at the expense of popular grievances. Because the media safeguard the status quo, those who have power, position, and wealth are less likely to be slighted than those who do not. If such an occurrence happens, the dominant elite is accorded adequate space to respond. This same effort is not granted to others such as the poor, the peace activists, the labour leaders, nor the Mohawk Warriors or other natives.

This section of the analysis will examine whose version of the news was taken as the definer of certain events that include July 11, September 1, September 8, September 26, and the negotiations. Whose version of events was taken as fact? All these dates were very important in the development of the crisis.

III.i(i). July 11, 1990

"Who shot Lemay?" became the question most asked following the SQ's raid on the Mohawk barricade. The Gazette said:

Police and native versions of the conflict varied sharply each accusing the other of firing first. Natives contend Lemay either shot himself or was shot by other officers. The Sûreté said he was gunned down by a Mohawk...Elkas said police did

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12 Parenti, Inventing Reality, p.218.
not fire the first shots when they moved in. "The only thing we shot was tear gas..."[127] [Emphasis added].

The article continued to explain the official version, while the Mohawks were basically ignored. The Sûreté said the Mohawks set some tires afire and began shooting as they approached the barricade. In York & Pindera’s account of the event, there is no mention of the Mohawks setting some tires afire. They describe gas and smoke in the air but it was from tear gas canisters and concussion grenades. One Sûreté officer said, "We didn’t fire one shot. There were women and children so we couldn’t take a chance..." The Globe and Mail’s report of the event also printed the SQ’s version. The article said, "Hundreds of shots were fired the officers said, but they did not return fire."[130] York & Pindera indirectly say in their book that the SQ fired first as they moved in past the barricade.[131] The Globe and Mail said that the SQ occasionally would send in officers "apparently to negotiate" with the Mohawks.[132] The SQ officers did not go in to negotiate. According to York & Pindera, the officers made it very clear that negotiations were out of the question. They were there to enforce the court order and they would see the removal of the barricade whether the Mohawks walked out on their own or if it was to be removed by force.[133] The Ottawa Citizen quoted Constable Serge Montpetit as saying, "...detectives were not sure if Lemay was shot by someone behind the Mohawk barricade or whether he was accidentally shot by another


[130] Picard. "Armed Mohawks..."

[131] This description along with the account of the smoke in the air was taken from People of the Pines. pp.34-35.


officer." This quote suggested that if the bullet that killed Lemay came from the Warriors, then the shooting was intentional. This same feeling was portrayed in the passage from the Gazette in which the paper toyed with whether he shot himself or was shot by another officer or whether he was "gunned down by a Mohawk." All four newspapers contained brief quotes in which the Mohawks said they only returned fire after being fired upon.

Because of the "criminal activities" that had taken place during the raid, the settlement of the Oka question had become a police matter. Premier Bourassa said, "Everyone is equal before the law. That's an inalienable and fundamental principle of our democratic system." He continued that it was a police matter and the law would be upheld. The federal government supported this assessment saying a few days after the raid that the settlement of the "impasse" was a police matter under provincial jurisdiction.

III.iii (ii). September 1. 1990

The army said it advanced on the Mohawks of Kanesatake after reports of beatings, looting, and gunfire. According to Lieutenant-Colonel Pierre Daigle, the army moved because the "violent attacks...showed that civilians were no longer safe in the Mohawk controlled zone." This quote contained in the Gazette

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135 Kalbfuss. "Bourassa supports..."
provided no more explanation. The "violent attacks" were not even explained.

Alexander Norris quoted Brigadier-General Armand Roy as saying in a statement:

I am growing increasingly concerned about the potential of violence in the area given the existing tensions between Mohawk factions and the number and type of weapons they have at their disposal. I have therefore decided to adjust the deployment of my troops with the intent of ensuring the safety of the civilians and my soldiers in the area. This is neither an aggressive nor an offensive act. [Emphasis added].

The Warriors responsible for the trouble were reprimanded by the Mohawks; they did not need "protection" from the army.

Although one of the men beaten by the Warriors said he did not condemn all the Warriors, the army still maintained that the "intervention was needed to protect about 100 civilians in the settlement of Kanesatake." The army admitted to meeting some "resistance" from the Warriors as they advanced but as the Citizen stated, "There were no reports of casualties after Gen. Armand Roy drew on his supply of some 350 battle-ready troops to launch a classic pincer action against the Mohawks." Mohawks were given minimal quotes. Ovide Mercredi was granted two paragraphs in the Citizen in which he said the military should stop advancing and negotiations should resume.

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117 Norris. "Army push..."

118 A pincer is defined as "a grasping organ, as the chela of a lobster" in Webster's Dictionary. The army moved in from all directions basically "pinching" the Mohawks into the Treatment Centre.

In describing the treatment of protests, Parenti talks about how the media often say no violence erupted as if violence is automatically associated with protests. The same holds true for the description of this incident in which "no casualties were reported" as if they were expected. It keeps in line with the army's PR tour for journalists in which they had to wear bullet-proof vests to protect themselves from supposed errant bullets fired by the Mohawks.

Randy "Spudwrench" Horne suffered injuries in an army reconnaissance mission behind Mohawk lines inflicted by some soldiers. However, the only newspaper to report predominately the Mohawk version of the event was the Citizen. Ian MacLeod said Spudwrench suffered a "severe beating." He only granted the army one paragraph in which the "minor injuries" to the soldiers were mentioned.\textsuperscript{140} However, the three other newspapers contained lengthy descriptions of the event from the army's perspective, including Geoffrey York's article for the Globe and Mail. The army's explanation appeared first in his article followed by a brief rebuttal from the Mohawks. An example is as follows:

Army spokesmen said the patrol behind Mohawk lines was\textit{necessary} because the Warriors had erected a plastic sheet to shield themselves from army searchlights. "We just wanted to find out what was going on in there," said Major Remi Landry. He said the soldiers were\textit{defending themselves} from a Mohawk who attacked them with a knife. But the wounded Warrior said he was sleeping in a bunker when he was awakened by the army patrol.\textsuperscript{141} [Emphasis added].

No one asked or it was not reported if the beating was "necessary." Spudwrench's version of the event was used in York and Pindera's book. The authors are critical of the army in the book. They write.

\textit{Meanwhile, army spokesmen were scrambling to explain the brutal beating of the warrior...But the official explanations failed to answer the key questions. The army had promised to give clear warnings before making any movements. It had promised no further advances against the remaining warriors. And it had promised to take every}


\textsuperscript{141} York. "Oka Warriors..."
precaution to avoid bloodshed. All of those promises had now been broken. 142

Ann McLaughlin of the Gazette said Spudwrench was in hospital suffering from “minor head injuries.” She said that Mohawks said the Warrior “had been beaten severely.” However, she clearly stated the army’s position first before adequately explaining the Mohawk position. “The Canadian Forces said the soldiers acted in self-defense...” and she quoted Major Richard Larouche as saying. “They had to defend themselves and what happened, happened.” 143 However, it was the Winnipeg Free Press which mainly relied on the official version. According to this version, the army said the Warrior had started it:

The soldier told the Warrior he had no aggressive intentions, but the Warrior drew a knife and attacked the soldier. They were joined by another soldier and the two subdued the Warrior, during which the Indian received a gash near his eye that required stitches. 144 [Emphasis added].

It is interesting that in the reporting of this event, none of the four newspapers had any substantial quotes from Dr. David Gorman, the doctor who treated Spudwrench. A doctor would normally be an “authorized knower,” a factual information source, but his version of the event differed from the army’s version of the events. 145 After examining the injured Warrior, Dr. Gorman said:

His injuries are very serious. He has multiple lacerations, a possible skull fracture, and severe head injuries. He’s semi-conscious. He

145 Ericson, Baranek, and Chan, Visualizing Deviance, p.18.
has lost quite a bit of blood. It's possible that he could die. The next twenty-four hours will be very important.\textsuperscript{146}

The press did not want to discredit the army's operation.

III.iii. September 26, 1990

Fights and utter chaos broke out after the Mohawks holed up in the Treatment Centre walked out around dusk on the evening of September 26. There were reports from the Mohawks that there had been a double-cross by the army; however, it was the army's version which received press coverage.\textsuperscript{147}

Three of the four newspapers, with the exception of the \textit{Ottawa Citizen}, reported the "disengagement." ironically a military term used by the Mohawks, in relatively the same manner. The following passage was taken from the \textit{Montreal Gazette}:

Military spokesmen said the chaos began when the Mohawks, in a last act of defiance, veered to the right coming out of the centre, instead of to the left as \textit{arranged}. Lt.-Col. Pierre Daigle, in charge of the operation, told reporters the Warriors had taken him by surprise. "We did not lose control of the situation. But we expected them to exit from the main road of the treatment centre. We had all the \textit{procedures set} up for them to come out in an orderly fashion." Major Alain Tremblay said, "They did not choose to exit by the \textit{agreed} route."\textsuperscript{148} [Emphasis added].

\textsuperscript{146} York & Pindera, \textit{People of the Pines}, p.369.

\textsuperscript{147} The \textit{Ottawa Citizen} was the only one of the four newspapers to report the Mohawks' statement that there had been a double-cross by the army. \textit{CP}, "Oka residents apprehensive about the future." \textit{Ottawa Citizen}, September 27, 1990. This element of the September 26 disengagement will be discussed in more detail under \textit{Bias through the Omission of News}.

There was no "arranged" or "agreed" upon procedure for exiting the Treatment Centre. An agreement to allow observers into the compound before leaving was unilaterally cancelled by the army. Because of the cancellation of the agreement and the fact that the Mohawks believed they had committed no crimes, the Mohawks decided to leave the Treatment Centre in a disorderly fashion to signal to the world that they were not surrendering.149

The Citizen's reporters MacLeod and Rusnell focused their article's attention on the melee that ensued instead of the army's statements of what was supposed to happen. The reporters referred to the soldiers fixing their bayonets and pushing Mohawks to the ground. They wrote, "Several [soldiers] lashed out with their rifle butts. One Mohawk woman was slammed in the chest and fell gasping onto the pavement."150

Following the "disengagement," the officials of both governments praised their handling of the crisis. Premier Robert Bourassa said, "The government's firm determination in reaching a peaceful settlement has been confirmed."151 In a lengthy article contained as part of the Globe and Mail's coverage of the event, Tom Siddon credited the House of Commons debate two days earlier for ending the crisis. He said,

We would not negotiate complex and sensitive land issues while people were brandishing arms, and while we had this kind of conflict going on...I don't believe that an earlier call of Parliament would have altered circumstances at that time. I don't believe that the rhetoric

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149 York & Pindera, People of the Pines, pp.396-397.
150 Ian MacLeod and Charles Rusnell, "Where the hell is my baby?" Ottawa Citizen, September 27. 1990, p.A1.

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of Parliament, at a time when we had roadblocks up on the Mercier Bridge and serious matters of conflict, could have had the same results as the circumstances of this week have produced...In keeping with the commitments reiterated throughout this conflict, I have now instructed my officials to organize a meeting between myself and the people of Kanesatake, at their earliest convenience, to discuss the negotiation of the land issue.\textsuperscript{152}

Another issue dealing with the disengagement concerned the reasons why the Mohawks walked out at that particular point. According to the Winnipeg Free Press and the Ottawa Citizen,

Mohawk determination to hold out was sapped by several factors. The Mohawks have complained that food deliveries arranged by the army have been inadequate. cigarette supplies have dried up and warm clothing has not been allowed in.\textsuperscript{151}

The belittling comment about the cigarette supplies portrayed a stereotypical image of the 'Indian as alcoholic, cigarette smoker.' On that day's program of the now defunct CBC's The Journal, the Mohawks said they left because of the isolation, the frustration, and the constant harassment by the army. The Mohawks decided to leave the encampment because they believed they had accomplished all they could. They united aboriginal people across the country: gained support from the European Parliament; and the House of Commons agreed to an emergency debate on the situation. In addition, they forced the Mulroney government to make native issues a higher priority. They decided to take their fight into the political arena.\textsuperscript{154}


\textsuperscript{154} York & Pindera. People of the Pines. p.393.
In order to find the "legitimate" leaders of Kanesatake, the federal government forced a band-council election on the Mohawks in late-spring of 1991. According to the federal government, it was this lack of "legitimate" leadership which was stalling the land transfer to the Mohawks of Kanesatake, land which till this very day has not been turned over to the Mohawks of Kanesatake. In fact, Tom Siddon blamed the entire Oka crisis on the divisions in the Mohawk community. Testifying before the Commons' Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs in February 1991, he said the lack of legitimate leadership caused a paralysis of decision-making and led to the violence of July 11. The article said.

According to Siddon, the federal government has been trying for three years to provide the Mohawk band at Oka with a consolidated tract of land, but every effort has failed because of one problem: The Mohawks of Oka are divided, and no way has yet been found to have the community speak with one legitimate voice...Siddon told the committee, "The town of Oka agreed to abandon its plans to extend its golf course. At that time, the band council also made a commitment to seek approval of the framework agreement from band members by March 1990." This agreement, if it had been implemented, clearly would have headed off the crisis of 1990.155 [Emphasis added].

As previously mentioned, the "framework agreement" was never accepted by the Mohawks so any mention of it clouded the issue. Johnson, besides taking Siddon's explanation as purely factual, wondered if the Canadian public had known what Siddon testified about during the crisis, then maybe public opinion would have been quite different. He wrote that this testimony put an "entirely different light" on the actions of Oka which had been accused of starting this in

the first place. The town was impatient. Even the headline takes Siddon's explanation as fact.

Roughly 96 per cent of the eligible Mohawks voted for an election system instead of the traditional clan mother system. Tom Siddon said, "I am very pleased that the people of Kanesatake themselves have settled the governance issue. I am confident that stability can now return to the community."156 However, the Globe and Mail reported that all the Mohawk factions in Kanesatake opposed the results but the government planned on forcing the results on the community. In neither the Gazette nor the Globe and Mail were quotes from the Longhouse included. The minister of state for Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Monique Landry, said the enforcement of the results was in the best interest of the community. Even the low turnout, less than half of the eligible voters, and boycott by followers of the Longhouse did not trouble Ms. Landry because "Indians don't generally vote."157

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156 Alexander Norris and Peter Kuitenbrouwer. "Kanesatake votes solidly for elected band council." Montreal Gazette, June 1, 1991. p.A5. It is true that divisions existed amongst the Mohawks of Kanesatake, however, there always was unity on the issue of the land. Also, there were divisions in the Bourassa cabinet between those who advocated an all-out assault on the Mohawks and those who wanted a peaceful settlement. The cabinet divisions were not reported. Taken from Winter, Common Cents, p.226.

157 Patricia Poirier. "Ottawa intends to impose vote on Kanesatake." Globe and Mail, June 3. 1991. p.A6. Negotiations prior to the May 31 election were conducted with the deliberate exclusion of the Longhouse people. It was the intention of the federal government to create a reserve in Kanesatake, which is opposed by the Longhouse. Western-style elections, reserves, the band council, and anything associated with the Indian Act is alien to the Longhouse people. As explained by Ellen Gabriel during her speech in Windsor, Ont. on November 14, 1992, the Longhouse members view the Mohawks as a sovereign people. As a sovereign nation, no one has control over them.

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III.III. The Negotiations

From the very start of the latest crisis on July 11, the government refused to accept any responsibility for the results. As the SQ and Mohawks settled in for a long standoff, Tom Siddon said his department tried for months to find a settlement to the land issue. But now that the Mohawks had taken up arms in defense of the land. Siddon said the federal government would not negotiate until the barricades came down because the government "cannot negotiate at gunpoint."¹⁵⁸

Because the SQ had prevented food and advisors from entering the community, the Mohawks drafted a list of three preconditions which had to be met prior to any further negotiations.¹⁵⁹ The preconditions included free access to food and other provisions; unhindered access to clan mothers, spiritual leaders and other advisors; and the posting of independent international observers. A July 14 agreement made between Ciaccia and the Mohawks had failed due to the "hawks" in the Quebec cabinet. In addition, the Mohawks revised their demands to include title to the lands slated for the golf course expansion and the rest of the Commons; the withdrawal of all police forces from all Mohawk territories; a forty-eight-hour time period in which those leaving would not be subject to arrest; and the referral of all disputes arising from the conflict to the World Court at the

¹⁵⁸ In the July 20 edition of the Globe and Mail (Geoffrey York, "Ottawa urges Oka to sell land"). Siddon said Quebec had "passed the ball over to the federal government," however the federal government immediately said they would not negotiate until the barricades were down. This same sentiment was reiterated during the Parliamentary debate of September 24.

¹⁵⁹ York & Pinder, People of the Pines, p.216.
In a July 23 Globe and Mail article, Ciaccia said the tentative agreement fell apart because the Mohawks made new demands that had nothing to do with the land claims of Kanesatake and the bridge blockade. The "new" demands were not even reported in the article. Ciaccia's version was taken as fact without dispute.

On August 5, Bourassa issued an ultimatum. He told the Mohawks to return to the negotiating table within the next 48 hours or face the consequences. The Globe and Mail reported Siddon's and Ciaccia's explanations of the ultimatum. Siddon said, "Having posed three conditions for the removal of the barricades which were completely met by Quebec's offer, the Mohawks have now added four new ones." Ciaccia said.

The Mohawks want the government of Quebec to accept in advance, and in writing, that it will negotiate over Mohawk territory, including that part of it which is in New York state, Quebec and Ontario. The government of Quebec has many times repeated that it will not negotiate territorial questions as long as the barricades are in place. [Emphasis added].

Ciaccia's statement assumes that Quebec had the authority to discuss such issues. Provinces cannot negotiate land claim issues. Land claims are under the jurisdiction of the federal government. However, this fact was not reported in any of the four newspapers. More importantly, the Mohawks never made such a demand on the government. The only demands on the table from the Mohawks were made on July 18, and there was no mention of settling the land issue.

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199 Ibid., p.216.
191 Picard, "Quebec ready...."
including New York, Quebec, and Ontario. In fact, there had been no negotiations for three weeks when Bourassa issued his ultimatum. Again, the Mohawks were made to look like they were asking for the impossible.\textsuperscript{113} Three days later, Bourassa called for the army. The army arrived in the region on August 28.

When he called in the army, Bourassa said, "We did what we could do. the maximum under the limits of our jurisdiction. But we can't be asked to settle in three weeks a problem that has existed for 200 years."\textsuperscript{114} The statement that they did what they could "under the limits of our jurisdiction" could easily have been explained to include the fact that Quebec did not have the jurisdiction to settle land claims. However, the statement was not challenged.

In addition to calling in the army, Mulroney "raised his profile in the dispute," according to the Gazette, by appointing Justice Alan Gold to mediate in negotiations.\textsuperscript{115} The fact that Mulroney was absent for weeks, fishing with George Bush, was not criticized.

Secret talks began on August 16; however, according to the official negotiators, the talks were in jeopardy from the start. Provincial negotiator Alex Paterson said the Mohawks presented a list of 54 people for their negotiating team. After several hours, the Mohawks agreed to appoint five official spokespeople.\textsuperscript{116} Paterson also vowed to work "day and night" to resolve the crisis but in accordance


\textsuperscript{115} Norris. "Moves by PM..."

\textsuperscript{116} The Globe and Mail did report that "Mohawk custom calls for all decisions to be made by consensus, not by majority vote." Andre Picard, "Bickering over process bogs down Oka talks." Globe and Mail, August 17, 1990. p.A6. Yet this was explained after Paterson's complaining.
with Mohawk custom, no talks would be held after sunset. In his description of the secret talks, the Gazette’s Alexander Norris indirectly belittled the Mohawk tradition of no negotiations after sunset. Quoting Paterson and federal negotiator Bernard Roy, Patel and Norris reported that:

Neither Paterson nor Bernard Roy...could explain why the discussions broke up so early. Roy initially told reporters the talks ended so Warrior-backed negotiators could return to their homes before sunset, in accordance with Mohawk tradition. But when reminded that the sun doesn’t set until 8 p.m., he said, “Yes but there are lots of clouds, and the sun may well disappear early.”

The demands made by the Mohawks were termed “bizarre” by an “impatient” Brian Mulroney. There was no mention of the Mohawks’ impatience, which has lasted 300 years! He said the governments tried to solve the land question through negotiations, but the “Mohawk negotiators were intransigent.” Because “good faith was not demonstrated” on the part of the Mohawks, Bourassa who looked “grim but determined” said, “the government has therefore decided to break off negotiations.” on August 27. The government said the Mohawks were insisting on full sovereignty and immunity from the laws of Canada and Quebec. This version was supported by the negotiators, Roy and Paterson, who said the negotiations “were at an impasse.” The Gazette reported:

Paterson said he realized Saturday - when he received that last list of demands from the Mohawk negotiators - that it would take a miracle to reach a negotiated settlement under the existing conditions. Paterson said there were too many negotiators on the Mohawk side, their demands were unreasonable and they had

168 Howard and Poirier, “Mohawk barricades...”
refused to make the issue of dismantling the barricades a priority.” [Emphasis added].

There was no explanation as to why there were “too many negotiators.” Instead of needing a “miracle,” maybe all that was needed was some flexibility on the part of the governments. The *Globe and Mail* reported Siddon’s account on the end of the talks:

He said the Mohawk demands included the right to create checkpoints, search vehicles at the blockades, and continue resisting a police investigation into the death of a provincial police officer in the July 11 attempt to break the Kanesatake blockade at Oka; amnesty for all natives participating in the barricades; and recognition of the Mohawks as a politically-sovereign nation... “This is unacceptable. The government of Canada and Quebec cannot agree to a balkanization of Canada which would see first nations become independent sovereign states.”

On the front page of the *Montreal Gazette* for August 28, a list of quotes from “principals in the crisis” appeared. One of the “principals” was Gilles Tardif, vice-president of the Paris-based International Federation of Human Rights. He said:

> I personally sat in on the negotiations. The Mohawks did not negotiate in bad faith. It is my observation that the Mohawk negotiators were sincere and I saw the respect they had for the federal and provincial negotiators.

This quote did not appear anywhere in the stories.

The official description of the negotiating process was confirmed in numerous editorials and commentaries made in the newspapers. In an August 20 news analysis, the *Globe and Mail*’s Andre Picard wrote:

> ...both Ottawa and Quebec have committed themselves to negotiations on the *broader, underlying issues* and, if the Mohawks do not make a concession soon on the barricades, they will risk losing

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169 Wills and Thompson. “The ‘last resort’”

170 Howard and Poirier. “Mohawk barricades...”
the gains they have made to date... There is every indication that the big ticket items, notably land claims and self-government, have been tackled and can be resolved. The Kanatake land issue, which sparked the battle in first place, is essentially resolved. Ottawa has spent $5.2 million to buy 39 hectares of land, and it will be turned over to the natives as soon as the blockades come down. Ottawa has also promised money for economic development programs. [Emphasis added]

As mentioned earlier, the main objective of the government negotiators was to get the barricades down. Until that happened, they refused to deal with the land issues. In his August 29 column, Picard wrote that an agreement was close but:

> The sticking point, in the end, was a native demand to redefine the political relationship between Canada and the Mohawk Nation. They demanded what no responsible government could ever concede: that Canadian law no longer apply to them and that the Mohawk community be recognized as a separate nation state.” Bernard Roy said.

Picard’s co-worker Jeffrey Simpson wrote in his column that “Governments have grown understandably frustrated with the Mohawks’ apparent unwillingness to remove the barriers, despite signing a letter of intent to negotiate the removal in a timely fashion.” The Globe and Mail’s editorial of that day. “Next steps after the barricades come down,” said. “...the federal and Quebec governments engaged the Mohawks in thorough talks aimed at reaching a peaceful settlement of the dispute.” And the Gazette’s editorial. "Army operation can succeed," stated that the government had "put their faith in negotiations with the Mohawks" but Bourassa "had little choice but to call on the army" after "it became clear last weekend that the negotiations were getting nowhere."

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171 Picard, "Police pullout..."
173 Simpson, "The trouble..."
Although the government said it would not "negotiate at gunpoint," they used this same strategy against the Mohawks. Jeffrey Simpson points out, although not critically, in his August 29 column that:

The governments' strategy is probably to increase the military threat against the Warriors day by day, so that serious negotiations can begin again with the Mohawks understanding that, if the talks break down, the military will act.  

As the army performed its mandate, the government refused to negotiate or entertain any notions of a conditional surrender. On August 8 Ovide Mercredi said that "By calling in the army they are giving a clear signal to our people that they are prepared to use whatever force is necessary to get their way." On August 29, an article appeared in the Gazette about the policy of brinkmanship used to force concessions from the Mohawks. Calling in the army was a "classic example of provoking or escalating a crisis situation to speed talks." This process of forcing under-the-gun negotiations upon the Mohawks was not criticized. In the end, the pressure tactics worked.

III.iii. Bias through Omission of News

Native issues and concerns of other minority groups generally go unreported, unless there is a crisis such as Oka. As noted by a native journalist, "When the Oka people took up guns to defend their land, the media immediately redefined the issue. Overnight it was transformed...to a matter of primary

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174 Simpson. "The trouble..."
175 Bob Cox, CP. "Military scrambles to draw up its plans." Montreal Gazette, August 9, 1990.
interest."177 Omission of parts of a story or complete non-reporting of an event allows the status quo to continue.178 In addition to omitting part or all of an event, the press also neutralizes the news by blurring a non-official version of the event. By dwelling on surface details, the press is able to neutralize the truth while giving an appearance of having treated the subject thoroughly.179

It is quite obvious that non-reporting or omitting of an issue is one of the most blatant forms of bias. The reporting of the Oka crisis omitted some important happenings which affected the understanding and development of the crisis. The topics to be discussed in this section include the negotiations, the denied entry of the Human Rights Commission, the events surrounding the rock-throwing, the problems encountered transferring Spudwrench to the hospital, and the circumstances surrounding the September 26 "disengagement."

III.i.ii(i). The Negotiations

Following the July 11 raid on the Mohawk barricade, federal Indian Affairs minister Tom Siddon immediately tried to shift the blame elsewhere when he stated that his department had tried to mediate a settlement between the Mohawks and the town of Oka. However, what all four newspapers failed to mention was that although the federal government had mediated in the dispute,

177 "Media define when natives are worth covering." Tekawennake, September 26, 1990.
178 Cirino, Don't Blame the People, p.141.
179 Parenti, Inventing Reality, pp.222-223.
they had a "framework agreement." The "framework agreement" doomed any chance at a negotiated settlement right from the start.

According to York and Pindera, the federal government first tabled the "framework agreement" in September of 1989. Throughout the crisis, Siddon often referred to this "framework agreement" which truly mislead the public into thinking that the Mohawks had violated it. This was not true: the Mohawks of Kanesatake never accepted the agreement.

Under the federal proposal, the government planned to unify Kanesatake's land base and create a reserve. However, prior to initiating this action, the Mohawks had to settle the jurisdictional squabble with Oka over the Crown-owned lands. This doomed the proposal from the start since the Mohawks refused to trade their rights to other Crown-owned lands in the town for the land slated for golf course expansion. Instead of reporting the Mohawks' position, the four newspapers ignored this fact and printed the "shocked" reactions from federal officials, such as Siddon and Yves Désilets, over the violent reaction on July 11. According to the federal officials, a deal was near that the Mohawks ruined.

\footnote{York & Pindera. \textit{People of the Pines}, pp.48-49.}

\section*{July 20, 1990}

In violation of the Quebec Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Sûreté du Québec prohibited the Human Rights Commission from entering Kanesatake. beginning on July 13. On July 19, the Quebec public security minister, Sam Elkas, gave permission for the Commission to enter. However, on July 20, they were again refused entry, along with the Red Cross. Because a telegram to Robert
Bourassa was made public on July 21, the SQ was eventually forced to co-operate with the Commission.\footnote{Ibid., p.210.}

The Globe and Mail ran an article on page A3 concerning the access denied to the Commission.\footnote{Patricia Poirier. "Quebec human rights group refused entry to Mohawk area." Globe and Mail. July 20, 1990. p.A3.} Commission spokespeople said they did not know why they were denied entry. The SQ refused to say why the Commission was denied entry. One SQ spokesman said, "They were not allowed because they were not allowed."

Although the article appeared in the Globe and Mail, there was no reference to the problems the Commission encountered for the previous week. Also, the direct violation of the Charter was not mentioned except in response to why the Commission wanted to enter Kanesatake in the first place.\footnote{Irving Cotler, a human-rights activist and a law professor at McGill University, said the Commission was asked to investigate police violations of the Charter. He also said that the decision to deny access to the Commission was "another example of an unreasonable infringement of rights." but the violation of the Charter was not clearly spelled out.} The Montreal Gazette ignored the story completely. No stories appeared, nor was there any reference in the articles which did appear in the paper.

\textbf{III.iii(iii). August 28, 1990}

Although the Globe and Mail made reference to the fact that the cars had cleared police checkpoints, the reporting by all four newspapers, of the infamous rock-throwing incident, ignored some important aspects of the event.\footnote{CP, "Mercier Bridge mob stones convoy of fleeing Mohawks." Globe and Mail, August 29, 1990. p.A4.} For
starters, the caravan of cars carrying Mohawk women, children, and the elderly from the Kahnawake reserve was delayed on the bridge for two hours while police searched their cars. At the time the Mohawks entered the bridge, there were only thirty demonstrators. By the time the Mohawks were given clearance to move on, the crowd had grown to about four hundred. The newspapers also did not report that the crowd had grown.\footnote{York & Pinder, \textit{People of the Pines}, p.319.}

The organizers of the caravan expected trouble. They asked for and received assurances that the police and RCMP would give all available officers for the evacuation. Together, the police and RCMP had seventy officers available. The following day, the \textit{Montreal Gazette} contained an article in which the organizer of the caravan, Alwyn Morris, said he had the assurance from the SQ. The SQ confirmed this but said they "couldn't predict the crowd would grow so large and would be violent."\footnote{Orsini and Heinrich, "Police promised..."} However, what is absent from the explanation of why the crowd grew so large is the fact that the radio station, CJMS, informed its "angry" listeners of the evacuation plans.\footnote{One CJMS talk-show host, Gilles Proulx, was considered a cheerleader for the riots. He played upon the Quebec nationalist theme saying that the Mohawks couldn't even speak French. His radio station monitored the Kahnawake radio station in order to get the up-to-the-minute details on the crisis. York & Pinder, \textit{People of the Pines}, pp. 239 & 250.} Instead of reporting the racist undertones of inciting the crowd to violence, the reporting ignored this aspect of the story, and therefore, added credence to the official version of the story. The support comes through in the way the story was reported. Instead of the radio station connec-
tion, the story was reported as if the crowd swelling was a surprise and the police did all they could.

September 8, 1990

The reporting of Spudwrench's beating by soldiers did contain reference to the fact that transferring him to the hospital did take a long time, but the reporting ignored, for lack of a better term, the adventure experienced by Dr. David Gorman in getting Spudwrench adequate treatment.118

Because the Mohawks did not trust the army and believed Spudwrench would be arrested if he was treated by an army physician, they insisted on having Dr. Gorman treat the injured Warrior. Four hours after receiving the call, Dr. Gorman was allowed to enter Kanesatake to examine the Warrior. Roughly three hours later, the doctor told reporters that his injuries were very serious and once his condition had stabilized, he would be transferred to hospital. Almost twelve hours after the beating, Spudwrench began his journey to the hospital.

Originally, the ambulance was to take the injured Warrior to Notre Dame. A bomb threat at the hospital rerouted the ambulance to St. Eustache. Suspicious that provincial police were at St. Eustache to arrest Spudwrench, Dr. Gorman refused to take the Warrior to that hospital. He demanded the ambulance be taken to Montreal General. Before arriving at Montreal General, the ambulance stopped at Hotel Dieu. Again suspicious, the doctor would not get out. When they finally arrived at Montreal General, provincial police were there. Four days later,

118 MacLeod in "Beating deepens..." said "The incident occurred about 4:30 a.m. but was not resolved until late afternoon." York in "Oka Warriors..." said, "Eventually the army allowed Dr. David Gorman to cross..."
Spudwrench was arrested and five charges were laid against him, including possession of a dangerous weapon and rioting.\textsuperscript{180} Spudwrench’s arrest was a violation of a promise made to the Mohawks that he would be returned to the community once he was well. This aspect of the story was also not reported.

III.(iv) September 26, 1990

The “disengagement” of the Mohawks was reported as a “surrender.” In addition, the army’s version of the story was taken as fact. According to the army and the four newspapers’ reporting of the event, the Mohawks, “in a last act of defiance,” veered to the side instead of exiting in the “pre-arranged” form out the front of the encampment. However, the four newspapers made no mention of the fact that the army, just prior to the exit, cancelled the agreement made.

The deal worked out between the Mohawks and the army would have allowed observers, such as attorneys and ministers, into the compound before the Mohawks walked out. The army, without explanation, unilaterally cancelled the agreement. Now that the agreement was null and void, the Mohawks decided to make a statement when they left. The Mohawks believed they had committed no crimes and they were not surrendering. By exiting in a disorderly fashion, the Mohawks were able to create one last symbolic gesture.\textsuperscript{181} The Ottawa Citizen made reference to the double-cross. One Mohawk in Oka said, “There was a double-cross. It was supposed to be the army but they’re being taken away by

\textsuperscript{180} The account of the adventure was taken from York & Pindera. People of the Pines, pp.369-371.

\textsuperscript{181} This version of the events was taken from York & Pindera. People of the Pines, pp.396-397 and CBC’s The Journal, September 26, 1990.
provincial police. "191 No other newspaper reported this fact nor the fact that the army had cancelled the agreement.

In addition to not reporting the army's cancellation of the deal, the newspapers also did not report the brutality in the chaos that surrounded the walk-out. With the exception of one passage in the Ottawa Citizen concerning a Mohawk woman who was slammed in the chest by a soldier, the coverage ignored the actions of the soldiers. Lasagna was tackled by soldiers and immediately turned over to the SQ. "192 One Warrior was grabbed and his hearing aid fell to the ground. When he asked the soldiers to retrieve it, a soldier crushed it under his boot. A Mohawk woman was stabbed in the chest with a bayonet. Seventeen hours later she was treated for her wound. Also, the police and the army refused to allow the Mohawks' attorneys to be present during questioning. "193 Instead of reporting the brutality of the event, the reporting made it sound as if the Mohawks started the fights and the soldiers reacted with discipline and restraint. Picard and York wrote.

The Warriors and their supporters were supposed to leave the encampment one-by-one, but instead they left as a group from various points in the bush. The action caught the army by surprise... "194

191 CP. "Oka residents...
192 While in police custody, Lasagna was beaten by the police who demanded to know who shot Lemay. He refused to answer and took the blows on his face in order that he had proof of the beating.
194 Picard and York. "Mohawk Warriors..."
III.iv. Bias in the Headlines

A good headline is a short poetic image that gives the reader the gist of the story along with an attitude about the event. Many readers get whatever impression they will get of what occurred just from scanning the headlines.\(^{106}\)

The headlines used for this section of the analysis fell generally under two categories. There were headlines that contradicted or ignored the content of the story and ones that portrayed particular images.\(^{107}\) A sample of headlines chosen from the coverage will be used to illustrate any bias in the headlines.

III.iv(i). Ignoring the Content of the Story

Some of the headlines used to describe or summarize stories during the Oka crisis ignored the content of the story. These headlines emphasized a particular part of the story, usually the official position, instead of that which caused or resulted from the event. One example concerned an August 2, 1989 Gazette article by Alexander Norris. The story was about a Mohawk and environmentalist protest at the scheduled tree chopping ceremony to begin the proposed golf course expansion. Norris said in his article that the tree chopping ceremony was "postponed...after a rowdy protest by about 50 natives and environmentalists."\(^{107}\) Instead of containing any reference to the protest in the

\(^{106}\) Cirino. Don’t Blame the People. p.155.

\(^{107}\) I decided on these categories myself. They seemed to describe the headlines used to illustrate any bias.

\(^{107}\) Norris called the protest "rowdy" again conjuring up images of a radical group. York & Pinder described the protest as a "polite demonstration." They also state that the presence of the media helped force the postponement. People of the Pines. p.46

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headline. The Gazette made the golf course look like a considerate institution by stating, "Oka golf club delays clearing of disputed land."

A September 7, 1990 Globe and Mail article concerned an army proposal to end the standoff. The proposal, which was immediately rejected by the Mohawks because "it would criminalize the entire Mohawk movement," would have put the Warriors in military custody. Instead of focusing on why it was rejected, again the Globe and Mail's headline made the army look as if it had a rational solution to the crisis. The headline said, "Army offers Warriors protection from Quebec police." In addition, the army's proposal was completely explained first before the Mohawks' rejection was stated in the fourth paragraph.

In contrast to the previous example, a September 25, 1990 Gazette article concerned a Mohawk "peace proposal" to end the standoff. The offer was rejected by Premier Bourassa because it discredited "the provincial justice system." Although the Mohawks' proposal was explained first, with only a simple statement that Bourassa had rejected the offer, the headline said nothing about the Mohawks' plan. The details of Bourassa's rejection did not appear until the twentieth paragraph yet the headline read, "Bourassa rejects Mohawks' offer."

A final example concerns a June 1, 1991 Gazette article about the band council elections in Kanesatake. The headline stated, "Kanesatake votes solidly for elected band council." yet the article stated that the "solid" vote only had a 45 per cent turnout. The article explained that three factions had declined to take part in the election. Instead of focusing on this previous fact, the Gazette's

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There were also two paragraphs written, before the proposal was explained in detail, that stated Prime Minister Mulroney's "improvements" for native people.
headline conveyed the image that Kanesatake was overwhelmingly in favour of a western-style election system which was advocated by the federal government. It also undermined the traditional Mohawk government.

III.iv(ii). Portraying an Image

Whether the article dealt with mainly the Warriors, the army, the government, or the police, the accompanying headline was usually used to convey a particular image. The examples chosen conveyed a generally negative image of the Warriors while being more sympathetic towards the government and the army.

If a reader of the Oka crisis was simply to scan the headlines, the Warriors could be viewed as criminals. Like the actual stories contained in the four newspapers, the headlines portray a negative image of the Warriors. This will be discussed in detail in the concluding chapter. Instead of placing the verb "claim" in the description, the Gazette's headline accompanying Harry Swain's allegations read, "Warriors are criminals top federal official says." The Ottawa Citizen's headline said, "Criminals' control Oka." The Globe and Mail's headline was a little better. It stated, "Federal official calls Warriors criminals: Deputy minister charges Oka dispute 'hijacked' by armed Mohawks." However as previously discussed, the newspapers take Swain's allegations as fact, providing no substantial rebuttals.

The headlines which described Spudwrench's beating also convey an intriguing image of the Warriors. Spudwrench was definitely the victim of a beating at the hands of soldiers yet the headlines did not convey that image. With the exception of the Ottawa Citizen, the headlines in two other papers portrayed
the beating as a fight, giving the impression that the injuries sustained by the Warrior were the result of a brawl, not an unprovoked beating. "" The Gazette's headline stated, "Warrior 'stable' after fight with soldiers." The Free Press' headline read, "Harper peace bid fails as troops, Mohawk grapple."

Although the Mohawks' "disengagement" was not a surrender, the newspapers portrayed it as such. The Ottawa Citizen's huge headline read, "Standoff ends: Mohawks surrender last stronghold." The Globe and Mail's headline, although criticizing the army for fixing bayonets and tackling Mohawk women and children in the second part, stated, "Mohawk Warriors surrender to military." The Gazette's headline exclaimed, "Oka siege is over." However, the Free Press' headline portrayed the "disengagement" as another brawl started by the Warriors. The headline said, "Oka siege ends in pandemonium: Mohawk Warriors grapple with soldiers in last act of defiance."

Before discussing the treatment of the government and the military, the headlines used to describe the rock-throwing incident deserve a brief mention. While the Globe and Mail, the Ottawa Citizen, and the Winnipeg Free Press acknowledged that the mob threw rocks at fleeing Mohawks, the Gazette's headline said the mob threw rocks only at the cars, not actual people. The headline read, "Mob hurl's rocks at Mohawk cars."

The headline which accompanied the Globe and Mail's article on Mulroney's late August press conference portrayed a helpless Mulroney who pleads with the

"" The Citizen's headline read, "Beating deepens Oka crisis." The Globe and Mail does not publish a Sunday paper so the Monday edition's headline, in keeping with the view that old news is bad news, dealt with the latest events of the crisis. The headline read, "Oka Warriors may soon surrender."
"menacing" Warriors to stop their lawlessness. The headline stated, "Dismantle barricades PM pleads." However, when the government is criticized, "claim" makes another appearance. In a July 23 Gazette article, the headline said, "Critics claim Tories have lacklustre record on native land claims."

Although the journalists who covered the Oka crisis said they were critical of the army after it cut off their cellular phones, the Gazette's headline of the incident is uncritical. It read, "Phones cut because Oka talks in final stage: army." The Globe and Mail's headline was much more critical. The headline stated, "Oka talks slow as news blocked."

III.v. Bias in Photograph Selection

Like the headline, photographs are auxiliary embellishments. framing devices. Auxiliary embellishments such as the headline and photographs can mislead or slant a story before it is even read. Although I did not look at photographs in particular, the ones I have available hopefully will reveal an interesting "slant" to the reporting.201 Most of the photographs selected picture the Warriors or the white protestors.

III.v(i). The Warriors

From the beginning of the crisis on July 11, the Warriors were often photographed in full costume: armed and masked. The Warriors wore the masks in order to shield their identities; however, this did not work. The masks only served to reinforce the government view that they were criminals and bandits. All

201 A study of photographs taken during the Oka crisis warrants further study.
four newspapers ran similar photographs of the July 11 raid. One that appeared in all four newspapers featured an armed, masked Warrior atop an overturned police car with his arms raised above his head. The accompanying caption read in the *Ottawa Citizen*, "...a *defiant* Mohawk raises his weapon in triumph as he stands atop a damaged police car."*211* The *Gazette*’s caption stated, "Gesture of *defiance*: Warrior Society member climbs atop an overturned Sûreté du Québec van..." "A *defiant* Mohawk warrior stands on overturned police van beside the reserve near Oka." accompanied the photograph in the *Globe and Mail*. It was only in the *Free Press* that this Warrior was not "defiant," but he was on a "captured" vehicle. The caption read, "Mohawk warrior waves his rifle from atop captured and overturned police car."

Another photograph had three Mohawks riding in the bucket of a front-end loader. The *Free Press*’ caption accompanying this picture read, "Mohawks *commandeer* front-end loader to build barrier." The *Gazette*’s caption read, "Jubilant Mohawks sit in scoop of front-end loader used to erect new barricade." However, the *Citizen*’s description made it seem as if the Warriors were on a joy ride after a ‘wild west’ shootout with the police. It read, "Three Mohawk *militants* ride in front end loader bucket after *shootout* with police." One more photograph from the events of July 11 that deserves mention appeared in the *Gazette*. The photograph was of a Mohawk Warrior giving "the finger." The caption read, "Mohawk gives police derisive salute."

Following the announcement of the army’s arrival, a picture appeared in the *Globe and Mail*, the *Ottawa Citizen* and the *Montreal Gazette* of a Warrior making

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*211* In all the cases in this section, the emphasis on particular words was added.
a V-sign with his fingers. Instead of viewing the gesture as a peace sign, the
Gazette stated, "Mohawk Warrior gives the victory sign as he waits behind the
barricade in Kanesatake." The Globe and Mail's caption was similar. It read,
"Mohawk Warrior flashes victory sign at Oka." Only the Ottawa Citizen en-
tertained the idea that the gesture may be a sign of peace. The caption said, "Peace
or victory: Mohawk Warrior offers salute."

One of the most infamous pictures of the summer-long standoff was taken
on September 1 following the army's advance on Kanesatake. The picture featured
a masked Warrior staring into the eyes of a young soldier. The photo gave the
impression that the taller Mohawk was older, perhaps a Vietnam veteran, versus
the almost cherubic, youthful face of the army soldier (see Figure I). Although the
photo represented a "real" moment, it presented a "biased" image, especially since
the Warrior was wrongly identified and the soldier became a celebrity. Although
it was widely reported that Lasagna was the Warrior in the photograph, the
Warrior was really Brad Laroque, a 23-year-old student from Saskatchewan. The
soldier. 20-year-old Patrick Cloutier was given an "accelerated promotion"
following this "act of bravery." However, other soldiers said his actions were no big
deal since Cloutier was with the Red Guard (the sentry detail outside the Citadel
in Quebec City). Following the confrontation with Laroque, David Johnston of the
Gazette interviewed his family and friends to find out a little bit more about this
"unofficial hero." The article stated that he was somewhat of a class clown and
polite. His mother gave him some advice that "has stood him well through his 20
years." She told him, "Patrick, when somebody talks to you, don't turn your head:
look him straight in the eye.” He was quickly promoted to master corporal. However, in April 1992, Cloutier admitted to using cocaine and he was demoted to private. He also received a 45-day jail sentence in a military prison.

Three of the four newspapers carried the picture. The Ottawa Citizen’s caption read, “Eyeball to eyeball: Neither Warrior nor soldier wanted to blink.” However, the Globe and Mail’s caption wrongfully identified the Warrior. The caption said, “A Warrior who calls himself Lasagne [sic] talks to soldier yesterday in Oka, Que. They are on land taken from Warriors on Saturday.” The photograph was also published in Osler’s book, News: The Evolution of Journalism in Canada.

The September 18 raid on the Kahnawake reserve by the army yielded pictures of fights between Mohawks and soldiers. However, the pictures’ captions supported the army’s view of the story. The Gazette’s caption said, “Mohawk hit soldier with his own helmet yesterday as army and Sûreté conducted search for weapons on Kahnawake reserve.” The Globe and Mail’s caption read, “A Mohawk winds up to punch a soldier during a fight on Kahnawake reserve yesterday…” Under the photos, there was no mention of the fact that the unarmed Mohawks may have thrown rocks and punches at the soldiers but the soldiers responded with their rifle butts and tear gas.

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2014 The Winnipeg Free Press did not carry the photograph. The Gazette ran the photograph on the front page; however, it was cut off during the copying process.

The "disengagement" offered another infamous picture of the crisis. The picture was of two Mohawk girls being held on the ground by a soldier. The Gazette's caption read, "One of the daughters of Mohawk activist Kahn-Tineta Horn clutches her tearful older sister as a soldier pushes the girls toward a waiting bus at the Oka settlement yesterday." The picture in the Gazette looked exactly like the picture contained in the three other newspapers; however, it seemed to be tilted in order to make it look like they were standing. (see Figure 1). "A Mohawk woman sits on the highway clutching her child last night after leaving Kanesatake and being stopped by soldiers." was under the photograph in the Globe and Mail. Again, a very non-critical caption appeared under the Winnipeg Free Press' photograph. It said. "Woman holds child in one arm, grasps soldier's wrist as she lies on highway after bolt for freedom last night." Only the Ottawa Citizen was somewhat harsher in its caption. The caption said, "Detained: A Mohawk woman screams as she lies on the highway clutching her child and the arm of a soldier detaining her..." In their book, York & Pindera describe the context of this photograph. The girl in the picture was 14-year-old Waneek Horn-Miller and her little sister Ganyetahawi, not a woman and her child as three newspapers said. After leaving the Treatment Centre, the sisters tried to reach Oka. They were intercepted by soldiers. Waneek tried to push past them but a soldier jabbed at her with his bayonet. She screamed and fell to the ground while the soldiers dragged the sisters. Only after the Mohawks were surrounded, did she realize that she had been stabbed in the chest. Seventeen hours later she was treated for her wounds.  

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York & Pindera, People of the Pines, pp.399-400.
III.viii. The White Protestors

A Globe and Mail photograph which accompanied Andre Picard's article, "A Question of Nationhood." showed Châteauguay protestors burning native effigies. Instead of a belittling caption, the protestors were simply described as angry Quebeckers. The caption said, "Quebeckers opposed to blockades mounted by Mohawks at Châteauguay burn an effigy of an Indian."

The photograph which appeared in all four newspapers on August 28, showed a group of men throwing rocks. The Winnipeg Free Press was the only paper to be somewhat critical of the action in its caption. It said, "Shouting, rock-throwing mob attacks Mohawks leaving Kahnawake over Mercier Bridge yesterday." The other three newspapers' captions justified the action of the rock-throwers, since of course they were angry. The Ottawa Citizen's caption read, "Angry: Protesters threw rocks, insults at Mohawks trying to leave Kahnawake."

"Angry South Shore residents throw stones at Mohawks trying to leave Kahnawake by the Mercier Bridge yesterday." was the caption in the Globe and Mail. The Gazette's caption stated, "Demonstrators in LaSalle throw rocks at a convoy of 60 cars carrying Mohawk families out of Kahnawake via the Mercier Bridge."

Although this photograph had nothing to with the Warriors or the protestors, it deserves mention. The photograph appeared in the September 26 edition of the Globe and Mail. The photograph was of Reverend Jesse Jackson leaving Kanesatake after being denied entry by the army. Even though the Rev.

207 Also in all three newspapers, the rock-throwers were not described as "mobs" or "rock-throwers" for that matter. They were "residents." "demonstrators," and "protestors."
Jackson was upset about his denied access. you would never know it by the photograph. The picture showed Jackson facing a soldier smiling. The caption read. "U.S. civil rights activist Jesse Jackson passes a soldier outside the Mohawk stronghold at Kanesatake near Oka. Que. He was not allowed to visit the Warriors." If someone simply viewed the photograph and read the caption. the disappointment expressed by Rev. Jackson in the article would not have been apparent and the army would not have likely been viewed critically.
CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSIONS

According to York and Pindera, the journalists behind the barricades in Kanesatake provided "the only source of accurate information on the conflict." Osler and MacFarlane (1991) in their content analysis found no significant evidence which may be drawn or inferred from the data suggesting any purposeful journalistic bias favouring one party to the dispute over any other. Generally, most journalists involved appear to have made a good effort, most of the time, to report as fully and as impartially as possible. However, what the content analysis and the authors' quote overlook was the fact that the "objective framework" guided the reporting of the Oka crisis. The end result was anything but objective.

According to Boswell (1991) the reporting during the Oka crisis followed the conventional standards of objective reporting. He said. They [journalists] failed, again and again, to question those conventional standards by which they judged the Oka coverage, so their conclusions have told us little about the fundamental flaws which impair all journalism, not just that of native affairs. What's never questioned is the faith that textbook journalism - professional disinterest, bare facts and telegraphic prose - can cope with an event..."

As pointed out in Chapter Two, the very methods of objective reporting harbour a bias.

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2 Osler and MacFarlane. "How Eleven Canadian Newspapers Reported Oka." p.3.
3 Boswell. "Oka: crisis in journalism," p.16. In the article, Boswell was commenting on the conclusions drawn from the meeting of journalists who discussed the coverage of the Oka crisis.
The reporting of the Oka crisis also failed to provide context to the Mohawk land claim. With the exception of a few articles, the standard explanation of the whole issue followed along the lines of: 'Oka wants to expand the golf course onto land the Mohawks claim.' In addition, the role of the Warriors in Mohawk culture was never explained. The article in the *Globe and Mail* which marked the first anniversary of the raid summed up the events which caused the 78-day crisis in true journalistic fashion. Devoid of context, the article said.

One year ago, on July 11, provincial police tried to forcibly dismantle a Mohawk roadblock, mounted to protest against expansion of a golf course on land the Mohawks claim as their own. Corporal Marcel Lemay died in the ensuing gunfire.\(^4\)

If the media had explained the Mohawk land claim adequately, the minority interest may have prevailed over the dominant, capitalist interest. By slighting or minimizing or ignoring the claim altogether, the four newspapers added credence to the official position. Shorn of the 300 year history, taking up arms appears, on the face of things, to be "militant." In context, however, it represents the final, desperate act of a downtrodden group which seeks social justice. A suggestion for future research would be to monitor the land transfer. Since the land still has not been turned over to the Mohawks and our Prime Minister is retiring, it would be interesting to see if and when the land will be turned over.

The literature discussed in Chapter Two, Section III revealed that official sources define the news. These official sources have gained the great merit of being recognizable and credible by their status and prestige. As Mark Fishman noted.

\(^4\) Picard. "Hurdles remain..."
Newsworkers are predisposed to treat bureaucratic accounts as factual because news personnel participate in upholding a normative order of authorized knowers in the society. Reporters operate with the attitude that officials ought to know what it is their job to know...In particular, a newsworker will recognize an official’s claim to knowledge not merely as a claim, but as a credible competent piece of knowledge. This amounts to a moral division of labour: officials have and give the facts; reporters merely get them.\textsuperscript{5}

The reporting of the Oka crisis followed this "objective" pattern. The account of events such as the July 11 raid, the negotiating process, the rock-throwing incident, the September 1 advancement, Spudwrench’s beating, the disengagement, and the May 31, 1991 forced elections were reported predominately from official sources. Regardless of whether the official portrayal was suspect as was the case in Spudwrench’s beating, official pronouncements were reported as factual and given prominence.

The official interpretation of the negotiating process claimed that the Mohawks were negotiating in "bad faith." Independent international observers contradicted this version; however, the media did not report the true facts surrounding the negotiating process adequately. The\textit{Gazette} reported a short quote from one observer but the article concerning the cessation of the negotiations was reported from the standpoint of the Quebec and federal governments. Even when it was acknowledged that an official announcement was absurd, as was the case with Swain’s comments on the Warriors, the allegations were taken as fact. Two of the four newspapers questioned Swain’s sources. At the very end of the \textit{Citizen’s} and the \textit{Gazette’s} articles, the reporters revealed that Swain refused to support his allegations with evidence; however, all four newspapers

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{5} Cited in Herman and Chomsky, \textit{Manufacturing Consent}, p.19.}
printed his statements without substantial rebuttals. His statements were taken as fact. In York and Pinder’s book, Swain’s allegations are called “highly misleading.” In terms of reliance on official sources, the press has not made gains since the McCarthy era of the 1950s.” This case study demonstrates that.

Swain’s allegations and many other statements made by Mulroney, Siddon, Campbell, Bourassa, army spokespeople, and unwitting “moderate” native leaders, were part of an organized PR campaign to discredit the Warriors. The words, themes and biases of these officials were not only reported but subsequently adopted as factual by the press. An example was outlined in Chapter Four, Section III.(iii), in which the government’s strategy was to demonize or belittle the Warriors. They were often described as cigarette-smuggling, gun-toting, masked criminals by officials. These adjectives became the “factual” image of the Warriors and further support appeared in photographs of the Warriors in which they were often in full “costume” and described as “defiant, militant, terrorists, guerrillas.” etc.

The lengthy quotes which appear under the discussion of the Warriors in Bias in Words & Images dispels the stance by some commentators that the Warriors emerged with a positive image. Instead, the portrayal of the Warriors was a classic example of what Lee & Solomon call journalists as “stenographers” of official pronouncements. Journalists such as Alexander Norris, William

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"Winter, Common Cents, pp.xvi-xvii.

7 Maclean’s George Bain, the Globe and Mail’s Andre Picard, and Gazette editor Norman Webster made comments along the lines that the Warriors had won the image war during the Oka crisis.

8 Lee & Solomon, Unreliable Sources, p.45.
Johnson, Greta Chambers, and Andre Picard adopted the government's assessment of the Warriors in their "analysis" pieces. According to the "art" of interpretive reporting, these journalists were just reacting to the news, and therefore, not destroying their credibility. As was illustrated in Chapter Two, the media do not question the spin on a public relations strategy when the source of the information is regarded as credible and legitimate. The government's PR campaign worked.

Omission of events or parts of events also added credence to the official version of things. The Mohawks' legitimate claim to the land, the pursuit of those claims and the failure of the legal system to provide redress went unreported in the articles. Additionally, the exclusion of: a discussion on the "framework agreement:" the problems encountered in transferring Spudwrench to the hospital; the role of radio station CJMS in the rock-throwing incident; and the unilateral cancellation of arrangements by the army on September 26, supported official versions.

In Chapter Two, Section IV, a discussion of journalistic news values showed that events are deemed newsworthy by essentially falling within two categories: normal news or deviant news. The actions of the Mohawks of Kanesatake and Kahnawake fell under the category of deviant news. A journalist in the native newspaper Tekawennake wrote:

When the Oka people took up guns to defend their land, the media immediately redefined the issue. Overnight it was transformed from a boring debate no one would want to read about, to a matter of primary interest to every reader and viewer...[T]he media defined the context within which they would view it. The story they were looking for was the possibility of violence...This definition of an issue as news is entirely the work of the media and no one else...Having dictated that only violence will attract their attention, they then

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denounce the use of violence, in an effort, usually successful, to undermine the credibility of the minority group and its claim."

The Oka situation drew the attention of the media because it violated the routine social practices and firmly held cultural beliefs of the status quo. The reporting of the events of the crisis and the subsequent control methods used to remedy the situation contributed to the organizing and enactment of social life. The reporting supported the continuation of the status quo.

Although the analysis herein focused on important events of the crisis, the concept of normal news was evident in some of the newspapers' coverage. Normal news, as discussed in Chapter Two, Section IV, is the reporting of official actions and reactions. One example was found on the day of the rock-throwing. Instead of reporting the rock-throwing as front page news, the four newspapers reported the army's statement that they could "move at any time." as the lead story. Another example appeared in the September 26 Globe and Mail. The previous day the Mohawks announced their plans for an "honourable disengagement;" however, the Globe reported as front page news, the new "Indian agenda" announced by the Prime Minister. A final example concerns the coverage of the "disengagement" by the Globe and Mail. The three other newspapers focused their coverage on the events surrounding the "disengagement;" however, in addition to the coverage of the event, the Globe ran a lengthy article in which Siddon said the House of

"Media define when natives are worth covering." Tekawennahe, September 26, 1990. Because of proximity, the Montreal Gazette covered the peaceful protests and the discussions prior to the July 11 raid. However, the erection of the barricades on March 11 was not covered.


"The Ottawa Citizen reported the rock-throwing incident on the front page, however, the top story was the army's statement.

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Commons debate made the “disengagement” possible. By focusing on official pronouncements, the media assigned a higher priority to them. The victims of the rock-throwing did not matter as much as the army’s announcements: the Mohawks’ plan for peace did not matter as much as the Prime Minister’s promises; and the Mohawks’ reasons for “disengaging” were made possible because of Parliament, at least according to Siddon.

As stated by the journalist in Tekawennake the land issue and the Mohawks’ efforts to stop the golf course expansion were not reported until they took up guns. When the Mohawks took up guns, they violated the standards of a “decent” society. As previously mentioned, only the Gazette reported any of the events prior to the July 11 raid. Shortly after the September 26 “disengagement,” the Mohawks and their fight for the land became a non-issue. Reporters did visit the area to mark the first anniversary of the July 11 raid. The Globe and Mail’s article which marked the anniversary discussed the standard history - police tried to remove the barricades erected to protest against a golf course expansion onto land the Mohawks claimed and one police officer died - the “phenomenal” political gains made by native people, the criminal charges the Mohawks were facing, the total cost to taxpayers, and the tarnished reputation of Oka and Canada as a result of the standoff. The mayor of Oka, Jean Ouellette, said he advocated that a “mock Indian village” be constructed to capitalize on Oka’s notoriety. The article mentioned, although uncritically, that the land had not been turned over to the Mohawks because the Mohawks were still a “bitterly divided community.” The government was said to be in the process of turning the land over [not yet accomplished as of this writing] since Kanesatake had found their “legitimate”
leaders. It was also mentioned that the village of Oka still owns the pine forest "worshipped by the Mohawks" and it could be subject to future development. The Mohawks do not "worship" the land: it is sacred to them, revered by them. The Mohawks, like all native peoples, see themselves personally as only a link in a continuous, unending circle of life, stretching back through distant ancestors and ahead through unborn generations. The land is the connecting element.

The article stated that the crisis cost taxpayers a total of $235 million for police, soldiers and compensation. Unlike the people of the surrounding towns, the Mohawks of Kanesatake and Kahnawake were never compensated for the 78-day-long standoff. This was not mentioned in the article. The court costs were extra. Another suggestion for future research would be to continue monitoring the coverage granted to the Mohawks of Kanesatake and Kahnawake. In other words, what happened to warrant the attention of the media?

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the Oka crisis cost us, the taxpayer, about $235 million for police, soldiers, and compensation: a figure which did not include the court costs from 1992. The purchase of the disputed land cost the federal government $5.28 million for forty hectares. Back in August 1990, Mulroney said that with this purchase, the crisis was over; however, the crisis continued and the cost to taxpayers mounted. Even with the inflated cost for the land, it did not cost nearly $235 million. Oka made a nice profit but the taxpayer

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12 Picard, "Hurdles remain..." The trials of the Mohawks and any hints at trouble in the Mohawk regions received press, even up until April 1993. The police presence near the Kahnawake reserve had caused some problems.

was stuck with an unnecessary bill. The natives may have made gains in the
political arena, for example the Charlottetown accord, but it seems that all the
Oka crisis provided was a “good story” for the media. After all, the Montreal area
media turned a profit from increased circulation during the crisis.\footnote{14}

According to the journalistic standard of objectivity, all stories are supposed
to present “both sides.” However, as illustrated in Chapter Two, Section VII, “both
sides” are reported only if they fall within the acceptable spectrum of the status
quo. Furthermore, the rule of getting “both sides” can possibly fall by the wayside
in order to meet deadlines or space requirements, but most often because of the
political bias which dominates the media. Providing another side to things only
becomes a cardinal rule when “special interests” are being portrayed, not the
“national interest.”\footnote{15} Thus, labour groups, women, minority groups such as
native people, et cetera, will have their perspectives “balanced” with countervailing
viewpoints. Official sources may not, by virtue of some ingrained acceptability or
veracity. The journalists who gathered to evaluate the coverage of the Oka crisis
stated that the coverage was “balanced” or both sides were presented fairly
because reporters were present on both sides of the barricades. In spite of this,
the Mohawks, whether they were Warriors or not, were not granted adequate
coverage. The July 11 raid, the negotiating process, Spudwrench’s beating, the
Kahnawake raid, and the “disengagement,” to name a few, were reported with

\footnote{14} Peter Kuitenbrouwer. “Media made money on Mohawk standoff. UQAM study
\footnote{15} See Winter, \textit{Common Cents}. 

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minimal quotes granted to the Mohawks." In many cases, quotes were not even granted to the Mohawks: native leaders such as Georges Erasmus or Ovide Mercredi supplied them. The analysis revealed that the journalists fell by their own standards. The rule of getting "both sides" fell by the wayside despite their attempts to exonerate themselves at the October meeting.

If the Mohawks or their supporters told of the offenses committed against them by the SQ or the army, the reporters never took them at their word. "Claim" made an appearance virtually every time an allegation was made against an official. Even though the journalists believed the SQ did not receive favourable coverage, the Quebec provincial police were allowed to deny any allegations made against them. In keeping with the rule that if an official is slighted, adequate space is provided for a rebuttal, the SQ was allowed to deny the allegations made against it concerning the July 11 raid in which it did not shoot: the cut off of food, etc. which it did not do; and the rock-throwing incident in which the officers did all they could. In contrast, the allegations made against the Warriors and the native negotiators were taken as fact.17 "Claim" did not appear nor were the natives granted a chance to respond.

In sum, the journalists' claim that they presented fair, balanced, objective coverage of the Oka crisis is unwarranted. The analysis conducted illustrated that

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16 An exception was Ian MacLeod's article in the Ottawa Citizen on Spudwrench's beating which contained predominantly Mohawk quotes.

17 The same courtesy was granted to the army, the Quebec government, and federal officials. Any allegations made against these officials was provided space for a rebuttal. In many cases, criticism of these officials was not even included, as was the case in Mulroney's prolonged absence during the crisis. Instead of criticizing his absence, the newspapers printed his statements verbatim.
the reporting followed the conventional standards of the objective method, a method which harbours its own bias. The Oka crisis was reported with "an eye" to the official version of the crisis, regardless of where the reporter was located. Even the reporters who were behind the barricades, with the exception of the Citizen's Ian MacLeod, granted coverage to official pronouncements even though their counterparts were present on the other side. Therefore, the allegations of bias applied to all the journalists. MacLeod went behind the barricades on September 2. On September 8, the CBC pulled out of Kanesatake leaving only a few journalists and no television reporters. The Citizen was quite proud of the fact that it had a reporter still there. Accompanying his article on Spudwrench's beating, the Citizen printed under his byline.

Ian MacLeod has covered the Oka crisis from the beginning. With the pullout late Saturday of all CBC personnel, MacLeod is one of the few remaining reporters still with the Mohawk Warriors.\(^\text{18}\)

The fact that MacLeod was one a few was again emphasized in the article about the "disengagement." It could be assumed that MacLeod was allowed to print from the Mohawks' point of view because of his "rare" status. MacLeod was interviewed by a colleague following the "disengagement" adding credence to his "celebrity" status.\(^\text{19}\) However, MacLeod was an exception to the rule rather than the norm. The Citizen still followed the conventional standards of the objective framework which emphasized official statements over others. It is interesting to note that the Globe and Mail's Geoffrey York had to write a book, People of the Pines, in order

\(^{18}\) MacLeod. "Beating deepens..."

to give his impressions of the crisis. Although the Globe and Mail has a reputation as a "writers' newspaper" (less interference from editors), York and other mainstream journalists are subject to considerable economic, organizational and professional constraints which adversely affect the news we receive. Left to their own devices, journalists such as York and Pindera can provide an excellent account of events. The problem does not lie with the journalists but with the ownership, institutional constraints, and professional norms.\textsuperscript{20} Under the conventions of objective reporting, he would not be allowed to print his story in the mainstream newspaper.

With regards to the reporting by the Winnipeg Free Press, the criticism that the Mohawks received too much press seems unwarranted. Although the analysis was limited to eight dates, the Free Press based their articles on the Canadian Press (CP) wire service. In most cases, the CP stories were provided by the journalists of the Gazette or the Globe. The Gazette and the Globe, as is evident by the analysis, did not favour or slant their coverage in the direction of the Mohawks, and therefore, the criticism of the Free Press' coverage was unwarranted. Like its counterparts, the Free Press followed the biased conventions of objective reporting which focuses attention on official versions. In the end, all four newspapers followed the conventions of objective journalism; no one paper was better than another.

This thesis presented a case study to challenge the journalistic claim of "objective reporting." A final suggestion for future research would be other analyses which challenge the journalistic method of objective reporting. Some

\textsuperscript{20} Winter, Common Cents, pp.xiv & 252.
recent events, such as the Clinton presidency and the claims of a "liberal" press, the coverage of the Bosnian war, the Waco standoff, and the coverage of the American issue of gays in the military, would provide an interesting challenge to the "objective" framework which guides journalism.

In the August 29, 1990 edition of the Montreal Gazette, a group of Catholic bishops said.

The crisis...has some painful lessons to teach us all about the fragile character of justice, peace and truth in our own society. These lessons include the awareness of major cultural differences, the entrenched realities of racism, the recourse to violence, the use of intimidation tactics, the misinformation campaigns, the forced negotiations at gunpoint...²¹

In addition, the coverage of the crisis can teach us that the claim of an objective press is superficial. It reveals that the media have a vested interest in protecting the status quo. The journalists' assessment of their coverage of the crisis was disappointing, but not unexpected. After all, why would professional journalists doubt their own credibility? Why would they challenge the myth of social responsibility? Why would they bite the hand that feeds them?

BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDIX I

This list of dates were for the Montreal Gazette and Globe and Mail. The dates chosen for the Ottawa Citizen and the Winnipeg Free Press are in italics.

March 11, 1990 -- the erection of the barricades.
July 11, 1990 ---- raid on the barricade.
July 20, 1990 ---- the day the Human Rights Commission and the Red Cross were not allowed to cross the barricades.
July 13 &
August 13, 1990 -- the Chateauguay riots.
July 23, 1990 --- Deputy Minister Harry Swain's "off-the-record" comments on the Warriors.
August 5, 1990 -- Bourassa's ultimatum.
August 8, 1990 -- Bourassa's request for the army.
August 12, 1990 - the agreement signed by Siddon and a member of the Warrior Society.
August 16, 1990 - the secret talks held between the government and the Mohawks.
August 17, 1990 - army called in.
August 20, 1990 - army arrived.
August 27, 1990 - Prime Minister Brian Mulroney's press conference.
August 28, 1990 - the rock-throwing incident.
August 29, 1990 - the dismantling of the Kahnawake barricades.
Sept. 1, 1990 --- attack of Mohawks by Warriors/army's advance.
Sept. 3, 1990 -- the day the Kahnawake Warriors made an attempt to recapture the Mercier Bridge.
Sept. 6, 1990 --- Mercier Bridge re-opened.
Sept. 15, 1990 -- army tour for journalists.
Sept. 17, 1990 -- cellular phones cut off.
Sept. 18, 1990 -- the Kahnawake raid by the army.
Sept. 25, 1990 -- Mohawks announce "disengagement."
Sept. 26, 1990 -- the "disengagement."
May 31, 1991 ---- band council elections.
FIGURE I

Windsor Star Library Photo
Original taken September 1, 1990

Montreal Gazette, September 26, 1990
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VITA AUCTORIS

Anita Christine Recchia was born on January 25, 1968 in Windsor, Ontario. After completing her secondary education at Assumption College, she entered the University of Windsor in the Fall of 1986. She graduated in the Spring of 1990 with a Combined Honours Bachelor of Arts in Communication Studies and Political Science. In the Fall of 1990, she entered the graduate program in Communication Studies at the University of Windsor. She completed the requirements for a Master of Arts degree in the Spring of 1993.