

Jock Radio/Talk Radio/Shock Radio
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Paper presented to the Canadian Political Science Association
June 2008
University of British Columbia
Vancouver BC

Introduction

Radio was my first love. As a teenager, living in small town Alberta, I used to stay up late in my bedroom listening to the CBC and marveling at voices originating from places like Poland, England and Germany. When I began my career in radio reading the news, I was told to pretend I was talking to one person. Like all good radio broadcasters at that time, I would try my best to form a bond with my “special” listener, and I felt radio was a truly intimate experience for newscasters and listeners alike. This intimate business has changed dramatically in the last 30 years. Technological, regulatory and market changes have influenced how radio conducts its business over the airwaves, with important consequences for the style and format of radio news. Jock radio, which features music introduced by on-air hosts, now offers a minimalist, “rip and read” version of a newscast, often produced elsewhere. Much of talk radio, which should be all about information, presents news as babble; chatter by radio hosts and endless call-in shows. Fortunately, industry self-regulation and government oversight seem to be holding off the worst excesses of the shock radio trend of attracting audiences with deliberately provocative and titillating, even defamatory and demeaning, broadcasts. As it stands, Canadians have a radio market that is markedly different from the American model, and provides us with a distinctive voice. How long it will last is open for debate, as the regulatory agencies that oversee broadcasting are increasingly pressured to let the market determine what is acceptable free speech and what is not.

Little has been written about the state of radio in Canada, particularly private radio, and radio has rarely been a topic of investigation by political scientists. Indeed, while conducting the research for this paper, I was continually frustrated by the paucity of academic analysis regarding Canadian radio. As Hilmes suggests, the academic study of radio was largely frowned upon, particularly during the 1960s and 1970s, mostly because radio was viewed as culturally marginal and technologically inferior to television (Hilmes 2002, 3). In the first section, I argue that radio remains popular and relevant, and is second only to television as a media source. I provide an overview of audiences and formats, thus mapping the radio terrain in Canada. The second section focuses on corporate concentration and media convergence and its impact on the radio industry. While there may be more channels on the dial, fewer and fewer players dominate the industry, and these players own everything from the local radio station (or stations) to television stations, cable companies, magazines, cell phone systems and video outlets. These trends are shaping what we hear and how we hear it and have particularly serious implications for the comprehensiveness of radio news. Third, I examine radio regulation, by the broadcasters themselves and by the Canadian government’s regulatory body, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission and show that attempts to censor radio have not been particularly successful. Finally, I examine talk and information radio in Canada and determine that American style conservatism and US talk radio formats has influenced this media genre.

Radio: Who Is Listening?

On September 11, 2001 when terrorists attacked New York and Washington, DC, many Canadians at work found they were unable to access television and instead turned to the radio for the latest updates. Indeed, I first heard about the plane crashing into the Twin

Towers, as I lay in bed awakening to the alarm clock radio. While I relied on television to truly bring home the story, when I went to work that day I found the internet to be an inadequate back-up. The vast number of people trying to access information on-line created system crashes and websites of major news organizations froze. I remember walking down the hallway at the University of Alberta and listening to the sound of CBC radio coming out of professors' offices as they tried to get a sense of what was happening. Radio was a reliable and important source of information in a time of crisis and confusion.

Who listens to radio and for what reason? Radio has been referred to as a "secondary medium" because "no one cares whether you listen to radio so long as you do not turn it off" (Berland 1990, 179). In fact, lots of Canadians listen to radio regularly, and for many different reasons. Overall, 92.1% of Canadians over the age of 12 listened to radio for at least 15 minutes a week in fall of 2005. On average, Canadians listened to 20.7 hours of radio per week (CRTC 2006, 12). A survey of Prairie Canadians conducted by the Canada West Foundation indicates that while the majority of those surveyed relied on television and newspapers for information about current events, 30% still turned to radio for information (Berdahl 2006, 8-10). Moreover, respondents living in "urban fringe and rural communities, and respondents with either a college or trade diploma, a bachelor's degree or a graduate/professional degree are more likely to report getting information from radio" and there is a correlation between increased income and age and increased reliance on radio for information (Berdahl 2006, 9). The Radio Marketing Survey indicates that 77% of Canadians listened to the radio while driving or while at work or school. Overall, Canadians spend "one-third of their daily media time with radio, second only to TV" (Radio Marketing Bureau 2007). According to the 2007 Foundation Research study conducted for the Radio Marketing Bureau, radio is seen "as a perfect fit for modern life; it's effortless, easy to listen to during other activities; entertains and informs throughout the day; is compatible with other media and provides a soundtrack for life" (Radio Marketing Bureau 2007).

Distinct radio formats dominate commercial radio stations in North America because they provide a way for radio stations to differentiate themselves from other stations and to attract listeners (Berland 1990,181). In essence, there are two main types of radio formats in Canada, music formats and information (or talk) formats. Music stations run the gamut from adult top-40 to rock to jazz to "oldies" music. Information or talk stations provide information around the clock. Taras suggests that "the key to radio survival" is the use of formats which will help "locate and appeal to a 'super core' of ardent listeners: people who will not only listen to the station but identify with the lifestyle and hence the products that it promotes" (Taras 2001, 103).

By far the most popular music format on AM and FM stations is adult contemporary with 125 stations broadcasting in English (or 15.8%) and 36 broadcasting in French (28.1%). Country, adult standards, classical and adult rock among others round out the rest of the music formats on AM and FM. Of interest to this paper, is the size of the radio market that provides news or talk radio formats. These stations make up 12.1% of the English language market (32 stations) and 11.7% (9 stations) of the French language market

(CRTC 2006, 29). However, when you combine the number of CBC stations with commercial private stations that also feature news or talk radio formats, the overall percentage of stations that offer information 24-hours a day in Canada is quite high. In total, 17.7% (25 CBC stations and 32 private radio stations) of the English language stations and 22.5% (15 CBC stations and 9 private stations) of the French language stations are talk/news formats. This suggests that talk or information radio is a salient component of Canada's radio station formats (CRTC 2006, 29).

The growth of talk radio in Canada and the US is a result of deregulation and expansion of technology in the 1980s. Beginning in the early 1970s, technological changes saw the expansion of FM radio because the new technology, FM radio was able to provide a provided a better listening experience than AM stations. Moreover, the increased availability of satellites for broadcast allowed FM stations to expand their markets and provide services to rural as well as urban listeners (Vipond 2000, 52). This meant FM radio stations in both Canada and the United States began to enjoy commercial success and greater expansion - but this expansion came at the expense of AM radio (Ellis and Shane 2004, 1371). Many AM stations faced extinction as "music listeners gravitated to better audio reception on the FM dial" (Riley June 2006). To compensate, many of these AM stations changed their format from all music to talk radio. The use of satellites also allowed stations the opportunity to make local radio national. Satellite technology allowed

stations to maximize profits by distributing their shows nationally. In comparison to the old method of relaying shows from one station to another using telephone lines, satellite technology provided a much cheaper and technically superior method of transmitting a local broadcast nationally. (Douglas 2002, 486)

This opened the door for radio hosts to take their shows to the national level, thereby becoming sensations and media stars (Douglas 2002, 487). Thus this new satellite technology allowed ultra-conservative talk show stars like Rush Limbaugh and for shock jocks like Howard Stern to play to a national rather than a smaller regional audience in the United States and in Stern's case allowed him entry into the Canadian market (Douglas 2002, 487).

Keeping Radio Lucrative

While much has been written about convergence and the creation of multi-platform media companies, little has been said about the effect that has on radio. Convergence of corporations has been aided by deregulation throughout the western world and has created economies of scale that eliminate competition and pools resources (Taras 2001, 70). According to the CRTC's annual broadcast monitoring report for 2006, the outcome of the consolidation has meant "the tuning share by the largest radio groups has risen considerably from 54% in 1997 to 63% in 2005" (CRTC 2006, 12). Over fifty percent of Canadians listen to radio stations owned by one of five private commercial radio companies: Corus Entertainment Inc., Standard Broadcasting Corporation Limited, Rogers Communications Inc., Astral Media Radio inc. and CHUM Limited. Moreover, Corus, Rogers, Astral and CHUM are all considered multi-media platform groups with

ownership of not only radio, but also television stations, television cable companies, specialty cable stations, and in the case of Rogers, magazine publication, cellular phone systems, and video rentals.

Corus Entertainment held 17% of the national audience and 17% of the English language radio listeners in 2005 (CRTC 2006, 25). According to the company website, Corus radio stations reach 8.4 million Canadians each week, with 50 radio stations in BC, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec (Corus Entertainment Radio). Corus Entertainment began as Shaw Communications Inc., and in 1999, it became a publicly traded company. In addition to its radio stations, Corus also provides television service including, CMT, the Country Music Video Station, the W Network, YTV, along with a pay-TV movie service. Additionally, Nelvana, an animated programming producer and distributor and a children's publishing company, is owned by Corus. Standard Broadcasting Corporation Limited held 12% of the national tuning audience and 17% of the English language radio listeners in 2005 (CRTC 2006, 13-15). Standard currently owns 51 radio stations in 29 Canadian markets across Canada. Rogers is Canada's third largest radio operator, holding 12% of the national tuning share and 12% of the English language radio listeners in 2005 (CRTC 2006, 13-14). Rogers is also a multi-media platform company, owning magazines such as Chatelaine, Macleans and Canadian Business, as well as television stations including the Omni Stations and Sportsnet Channel (Rogers Communication). Finally, CHUM limited holds 7% of the national tuning audience 9% of the English listeners in 2005 (CRTC 2005-2006, 13). CHUM owns and operates 34 radio stations, 12 television stations and 21 specialty television channels.

In the French-language market, Astral Media is the big player, with "32% of the hours tuned to French-language radio in 2005 and 49% of French-language radio revenues" (CRTC 2006, 13). Corus follows with 22% of the hours tuned, and Cogeco Inc is third with 10% (CRTC 2006, 13). Astral Media has 21 FM radio stations in Quebec, seven FM and one Am radio station in the Maritimes as well as one television station (TATV). According to the company website, Astral Media Radio operates "Énergie, RockDétente and Boom FM networks, which represent a total of 21 FM stations across the province of Québec. Each week, more than three million listeners – an impressive one out of every two Québécois (sic)!" (Astral Media Radio). Cogeco Radio-Television Inc. owns and operates RYTHME FM radio stations in Montréal, Québec City, and in the Mauricie and Eastern Townships regions as well as radio-station 93 in Québec City. In addition, it operates nine television stations including three Société Radio-Canada affiliated television stations (Cogeco Radio).

Consolidation in Canada's radio market is a relatively new phenomenon. In 1998, the Canadian Radio and Television Commission (CRTC) changed its Commercial Radio Policy to allow for increased consolidation of ownership within the radio industry. Prior to 1998 the CRTC restricted ownership so that a company could only operate "one AM and one FM undertaking ... in the same language and in the same market" (CRTC 1998-41, 1998). The new policy allowed for companies to operate more than one AM and FM

station in a market. These changes were the result of lobbying by the Canadian Association of Broadcasters who attended CRTC hearings and argued that:
ownership restrictions make it difficult for radio to compete effectively with other forms of media for advertising revenue, and harm the industry's financial performance. The industry representatives argued that increased consolidation of ownership would allow the radio industry to become more competitive with other forms of media, strengthen its overall performance, and help attract new investment. Other benefits identified by the CAB included increased diversity among formats and increased resources for programming. (CRTC 1998-41, 1998)

Music industry representatives did not support this move suggesting that diversity would be affected by increasing consolidation. Others “expressed concern that increased common ownership could lead to a reduction in the diversity of news voices in a market and could have a negative impact on smaller, independent radio stations, as well as on community radio stations” (CRTC 1998-41, 1998). Clearly, the decision was made by the CRTC as a way of ensuring the economic viability of the Canadian radio market and keeps it competitive.

The impact of consolidation has been felt in many ways. First, it has influenced the way radio stations staff their news rooms. With the creation of multi-station companies in both AM and FM, these stations can further cut costs by operating out of one centralized newsroom. For example, in Edmonton, Corus owns four radio stations. All four rely on 630 CHED, the AM talk radio station, for their news. The announcer identifies her/himself as providing the news from the 630 CHED central newsroom. The same thing happens in Winnipeg, with the CJOB AM newsroom offering centralized news for its sister FM stations. This has a number of effects. First, the number of news voices and news offerings available from these stations has been significantly cut, diminishing the variety of news perspectives available. However, there is a second consequence and that is on the reporting side of the news. Previously each of these newsrooms would have had at least one reporter to cover the major news happenings of the day. CHED now handles all of the reporting for all four stations and does so with only two reporters (McLoughlin 29 June 2007). The same situation has occurred in Winnipeg at CJOB. The fewer reporters available to ask questions in a media news scrum, the fewer opportunities to critically interrogate the political terrain. Think of it this way; it is easier for political spin doctors to control four reporters than eight.

There have been other responses to the pressure of the industry to ensure its economic viability and that has been to blur the distinction between news and entertainment. When I returned to radio in the late 1980s after a five-year hiatus, I was amazed by how much the business had changed. Gone was the formality of the newsroom and its clear delineation between entertainment (read: fun) and news (read: serious). The five-minute newscasts (or in the morning or drive times, ten minute newscasts offered every half-hour) have been replaced with a shorter update or eradicated all together. Indeed, most commercial music format radio stations appear to have significantly cut-back on the news gathering functions of their newsrooms and instead rely on what we used to call the "rip

and read" method. That is, they rely solely on the radio wire service and newspapers for news copy instead of producing their own news stories. As well, the breakfast show programs on most radio stations now consist of a team of announcers, and the news announcer is part of that team, expected to kibbutz and laugh while providing social commentary where necessary. This was simply not done when I was working in the 1980s. Then, the news man (and it was a field dominated by men, with women being chastised that their voices were not authoritative enough to be the morning news radio voice) sat behind glass in his news booth, delivering the news in a supposedly neutral and objective manner.

This does not mean that the radio audiences are not provided with information. They clearly are, as the radio hosts talk about the important news topics of the day, particularly the stories that made the front page of the local newspaper. However, the information comes across in a highly informal way and is usually replete with personal opinions and subjective and limited analysis. This new reality in the newsroom points to another type of convergence documented by Taras – the convergence of news and entertainment (Taras 2001, 70). The move toward "infotainment" was an idea first discussed by Neil Postman in his lament entitled *Amusing Ourselves to Death*. When stories about celebrities dominate the news, other stories about issues like public policy are ignored. Postman argues that the rise of successful magazines like *People* and *Us* changed how television viewed news and that also had an effect on radio:

...we appear to be left with the chilling fact that such language as radio allows us to hear is increasingly primitive, fragmented, and largely aimed at invoking visceral response; which is to say, it is the linguistic analogue to the ubiquitous rock music that is radio's principal source of income. (Postman 1985,112)

Thus, Canadian radio is also facing the dilemma of its television counterparts – is it's a business or does it serve a public service function of informing the listener? Increasingly, the trend in both media is to view their role as a business, with an interest in preserving the corporate bottom line.

Canada's public broadcasting system is also feeling apprehension about its corporate bottom line. The CBC captured 12.5% of the Canadian radio audience, with CBC Radio One holding 8.9% of the audience share in Spring 2006 and CBC Radio Two, holding 3.6% (CBC/Radio-Canada 2005-2006, 17). CBC Radio One's format is an information radio format while CBC Radio Two is committed to broadcasting Canadian music including classical music.¹ CBC is Canada's truly national radio system, available in even the smallest communities in Canada, including in Canada's north. A non-commercial radio station, CBC has struggled with diminished government funding throughout the years.

In CBC's 2005-2006 annual report, President and CEO of CBC/Radio Canada Robert Rabinovitch wrote of the financial challenges the Crown Corporation faces:

¹ In a recent move, CBC officials announced that it is broadening the type of music offered on CBC Radio Two, which has resulted in protests across Canada.

Securing stable, multi-year funding for CBC/Radio/Canada remains one of our greatest challenges. Unfortunately, this comes at a time when the corporation is faced with uncertainty around a number of key revenue sources. In 2005-2006, we continued to do our part to find funding internally through operating efficiencies and new revenues. But it is not enough. (CBC/Radio-Canada 2006, 2)

Unfortunately under the current political regime in Ottawa, the future remains uncertain. While the Conservative minority government may have bought some time for Rabinovitch, there are concerns that if the Conservatives were to win a majority that could drastically change. Current Prime Minister Stephen Harper while campaigning in 2004 stated that:

I've suggested that government subsidies in support of CBC's services should be to those things that . . . do not have commercial alternatives....And I think when you look at things like main English-language television and probably to a lesser degree Radio Two, you could look there at putting those on a commercial basis. (Martin 22 June 2006, A5)

Overall in 2005 – 2006, the CBC lost revenue as a result of the NHL lockout and a bitter labour dispute of its own that lasted until the fall of 2005. Those losses were offset somewhat by revenues from the coverage of the Torino Winter Olympics. Its Parliamentary appropriations increased to \$946-million (CBC/Radio Canada 2006, 59-60). However, the Annual Report is clear that "there is no question that the Corporation ultimately requires stable, multi-year government funding to surmount the many challenges it faces and to truly fulfil its mandate. We will continue to voice this need on behalf of Canadians" (CBC/Radio Canada 2006, 61).

There are other pressures now being felt by both commercial and public broadcasters from another commercial enterprise: subscription satellite radio. Satellite radio entered the Canadian market with two subscription services available in 2006 – Canadian Satellite Radio Inc. (CSR) and SIRIUS Canada Inc (CRTC 2006, 38). In August of 2006, CSR reported that it had 120-thousand subscribers and SIRIUS reported in November of 2006 that it had over 200-thousand subscribers (CRTC 2006, 28). What this has meant that while the Canadian radio station market is highly concentrated, diversity may still be available for those willing to pay the price. However, it still is not clear what this new technology will mean for private and public radio in Canada. More recently, the rise of the iPod has caused some concerns in the United States for the profitability of SIRIUS and XM, another satellite company. A radio market survey showed that both companies combined have less than 5% of the market share in large markets like New York and Los Angeles. This means that both companies have a subscription base of about 14-million in the US. Compare this to the sale of iPods which has already passed the 88-million mark. iPods offer essentially the same type of service that satellite subscription radio does: portable music that is commercial free. Industry insiders suggest that "over the past six years, the widely popular device has eaten into the potential market for satellite radio, simply because the Apple player has become so ubiquitous" (Ingram 2007, TQ Front). While satellite radio may not be overwhelmingly popular in Canada, its presence still

allows non-Canadian celebrity jocks the opportunity to find listeners in this country and it further forces radio stations to be cognizant of the commercial appeal.

Regulation of Radio: Is It Working?

In Canada, the CRTC and the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council (CBSC) still play a major role in regulating what can (and cannot) be said on air. The CRTC can suspend broadcast licenses, refuse to renew licenses or levy fines against radio and television stations based on complaints for violations of the Broadcasting Act (1991). There are two fundamental ways to control what can be broadcast. The first promotes diverse and balanced coverage, while the second policies harmful or defamatory content. While there is no "fairness doctrine" per se,² the CRTC does require balance. For example, "during an election period, a licensee shall allocate time for the broadcasting of programs, advertisements or announcements of a partisan political character on an equitable basis to all accredited political parties and rival candidates represented in the election or referendum" (Radio Regulations s.3). Moreover, the Broadcasting Act requires that "the programming originated by broadcasting undertakings should be of high standard" (Broadcasting Act 3(1)(g)). Secondly, broadcasting regulations for radio state that the licensee shall not broadcast "any abusive comments" (Radio Regulations s.6).

The CBSC also plays a role in determining broadcasters' codes of ethics but it is a self-regulatory board. The code of ethics in part outlines that "full, fair and proper presentation of news, opinion, comment and editorial is the prime and fundamental responsibility of each broadcaster" (CBSC c.6). It goes further to suggest that controversial subjects should be treated fairly with all sides of a public issue presented (CBSC c.7).

The standards in Canadian radio differ from American standards. As Ronald Cohen, the national chair of the CBSC points out:

In Canada, we of course benefit from a combination of regulatory and self-regulatory measures to respond to public complaints about broadcast content. In the United States, the self-regulatory option does not exist. It would also be fair to observe that Canadian and American values regarding broadcast content issues are not identical. Here, avoiding discriminatory and sexist comments on air appears to be a great concern than it is there. (CBSB 2003-2004, 1)

Cohen says that in Canada, the industry itself has worked at ensuring that broadcast content is controlled largely voluntarily without having to levy high fines or, as he suggests, with "(n)o heavy bludgeons. No heavy artillery. No Canadian governmental regulation or intervention required" (CBSC 2003-2004, 1). It is clear however that this relative calm in the regulation of radio (and television) broadcast content works only because broadcasters "buy into the process" (CBSC 2003-2004, 4). Cohen suggests that broadcasters "support the work of the Council because they know that, although its

² The United States was so concerned about commercial radio stations being used to promote only one viewpoint, it implemented a Fairness Doctrine that regulated the requirement for alternative viewpoints to be given access. For more information, please see Aufderheide 1990 and Benjamin 1987.

decisions cannot possibly provide the results they might hope for on every occasion, they will be thoughtful and balanced and will consider issues large and small before concluding" (CBSC 2003-2004, 4).

While privately owned commercial radio stations report to the CRTC and belong voluntarily to the CBSC, the CBC has additional regulatory requirements. The CRTC requires CBC programming to "reflect the multicultural and multiracial nature of Canada" (CRTC 2000-1, at 6 [viii]). This means that CBC Radio must attract hosts and guests who are demographically diverse. This also includes ensuring that women's voices are heard and are part of the broadcasting fabric. The same onus has not been placed on commercial radio broadcasters, who are only *encouraged* "to reflect the cultural diversity of Canada in their programming and employment practices, especially with respect to news, music and promotion of Canadian artists" (CRTC 1998-41, at 213).

Moreover, the CBC is committed to ensuring journalistic fairness in its programming overall. It is mandated to have an Ombudsman in place to investigate complaints regarding its programming. The English Services and French Services Ombudsmen compile annual reports regarding their investigations and these annual reports are provided to the CBC/Radio Canada's President and the Corporation's Board of Directors. The Ombudsmen evaluate the performance of the CBC on three fundamental principles: "accuracy, integrity and fairness" (CBC Ombudsman). Their jurisdictional areas are information programs on radio, television and the internet and include "News and all aspects of Public Affairs (political, economic and social) as well as journalistic activities in agriculture, arts, music, religion, science, sports and variety." Complaints about entertainment are considered outside of the Ombudsman's mandate (CBC Ombudsman). In 2005-2006, the English Services Ombudsman Vince Carlin received 1,868 complaints of which he reviewed 40 (Carlin). The French Services Ombudsman Renaud Gilbert received 1,019 complaints in 2005-2006, an increase of 10% over the year previous. Of the complaints received by the French Services Ombudsman, 169 were regarding public affairs programming and another 117 were concerns about accuracy (Gilbert). This clearly indicates that CBC/Radio Canada's commitment to fairness in its programming including in its talk radio programming is more than just lip service. The Ombudsmen in both languages investigate complaints and then must report back to the board on the status of those complaints. There is no reciprocal requirement of private broadcasters to ensure the same standards and there is certainly no expectation that they do so.

Does industry self regulation backed by the CRTC influence what commercial radio can air? Two case studies illustrate that market forces are more effective in controlling content than any attempts to regulate through government sanction or through self regulation. The first case involves legendary American shock-jockey Howard Stern who had a brief sojourn in Canadian radio in the late 1990s and early 2000s with his syndicated program appearing on Toronto and Montreal radio stations. In September 1997, Stern's show was syndicated in Canada for the first time and it aired on CHOM-FM Montreal and CILQ-FM Toronto. The CRTC noted that in the 1997-1998 fiscal year it dealt with over 37-thousand broadcasting complaints, with "a large proportion relating to the Howard Stern program" (CRTC Performance Report 1998, 44). In the first two

weeks that the Stern show was on the air, the CBSC received over a thousand complaints, the bulk of which were in reaction to what were perceived as anti-French comments made by Stern. In his September 2 1997 broadcast Stern suggested that there “is something about the French language that turns you into a pussy-assed jack-off” (CBSC Quebec Regional Panel 1997). He also said:

(a)nybody who speaks French is a scumbag. It turns you into a coward, just like in World War Two the French would not stick up for us. The French were the first ones to cave in to the Nazis, and certainly, certainly were over-productive for the Nazis, when they became their puppets. (CBSC Quebec and Ontario Regional Panels 1997).

The CBSC further determined that Stern made other abusive comments aimed at identifiable groups including the Japanese, gays, Poles, Sikhs, blacks and Arabs among others (CBSC Quebec and Ontario Regional Panels 19 October 1997). Moreover, his show was seen to regularly demeaning women by using terms like “pieces of ass, horny cow, dumb broads, dikes (referring to women with even moderately feminist views) and sluts” (CBSC Quebec and Ontario Regional Panels). Both regional panels in a joint decision ruled that the radio stations by broadcasting the Stern program had contravened the CBSC codes of behaviour. Meanwhile, Stern imitators began to appear in an attempt to re-capture audiences lost to Stern. Toronto's Humble and Fred Show on the Edge recouped their listeners from Stern by airing pranks such as a Good Friday promotion that suggested their show's producer would be crucified. As Tammy Silny, the radio manager of a Media Group in Toronto, put it: "Humble and Fred have become a little edgier since Stern came into the market, but they are certainly nowhere near him...but that's a good thing. We have clients who don't want to be on Stern. So Humble and Fred become that much more attractive." (Menon D16).

Ultimately however, the Howard Stern show was yanked off the air more because of ratings than any type of regulatory manifest. In Montreal, he failed to live up to his reputation to deliver strong ratings and CHOM dropped the show in August 1998 (Fine D2 and Bray D9). Toronto's Q107 cancelled Stern's program in November 2001 (*Cambridge Reporter* C8) after his ratings had declined substantially. Stern's show dropped from being number one in his time slot to number 6 (Goddard F5). In other words, regulations did not stop Stern, poor ratings did.

In a more recent example, the CRTC took the unusual step of removing a radio broadcast license because of persistent shocking and offensive content; however, writing this in 2008, radio station CHOI-FM in Quebec City remains on the air, with the ruling having little effect. In 1995, Jeff Fillion began as a morning host at CHOI-FM in Quebec City. Through the years, he along with his co-host Andre Arthur³ made names for themselves providing a raunchy morning radio program that among other things suggested that elderly people who are disabled should be gassed (Dougherty 25 May 2005, A19) and

³ Arthur ran and won a seat as an independent in a federal Quebec City area riding in the 2006 election (*Montreal Gazette* 31 December 2005, A12)

that foreign students at Laval University are children of cannibals because they come from the families of disgusting political leaders (Dixon 17 July 2004, R7).

In 2004, the CRTC refused to renew the license for CHOI based on complaints it had received from listeners. In its July 13, 2004 broadcasting decision, the CRTC wrote that it was basing its decision based on 47 complaints "it had received since CHOI-FM was acquired by Genex in February 1997. These complaints concerned the broadcast of abusive comment, offensive on-air contests, personal attacks and harassment" (CRTC 2004-271, at 4). This was an unprecedented move for the quasi-judicial agency and the decision was met with complaints of censorship from the radio station's avid listeners. In a show of support, 5-thousand people marched on Parliament Hill in protest over the decision on August 10, 2004, as the station's owner tried to press the federal government into overturning the decision (Paraskevas 11 August 2004, A1). Gingras argues that CHOI-FM, Fillion and their lawyers through out the 2004-2005 hearings and procedures before the CRTC and the Quebec Cour supérieure instrumentalized the issue of freedom of expression. She suggests that the idea of freedom of expression was used in an attempt to lend respectability to the station's actions (Gingras 2007,79).

The CRTC decision was the culmination of a number of sanctions against CHOI. The CRTC only provided the station with a short-term license renewal in 2002 because of the complaints that they had received about its morning programming. In its decision, the CRTC noted that the

licensee's numerous failures to comply with the Radio Regulations, 1986 ... and the condition of its license related to sex-role portrayals. The Commission also notes the licensee's failures to meet the objectives of the Broadcasting Act that the programming originated by broadcasting undertakings should be of high standard. (CRTC 2002-189 at 13)

The complaints about CHOI included the concerns that the morning show's host Jeff Fillon was disrespectful and vulgar and that "women are reduced to sex objects" (CRTC 2002-189, at 13). Moreover, the "entire morning show regularly swears on the air" and the programming is "sexually explicit"(CRTC 2002-189, at 13).

The Quebec Regional Panel of the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council also had to respond to complaints about CHOI's programming. In a July 16, 2003 decision, the CBSC ruled that the radio station had breached two clauses in the CAB Code of Ethics. The first is the clause that pertains to full, fair and proper presentation and the second is the clause that limits radio broadcasting that is unduly sexually explicitly or uses coarse and offensive language. The CBSC was asked to make the ruling after Fillion and his co-host called a rival radio host Jacques Tétrault a

"conceited asshole", "that worthless piece of trash", "a loser", a "piece of vomit", "shit disturber" and a "tree with rotten roots" Fillion also claimed that Tétrault had only achieved success on the coattails of others, was only interested in young women and was known to leave important business meetings for frivolous personal reasons. (CBSC Decision 02/03 0115,2007)

The Quebec Panel concluded that Fillion "was crude and offensive. He spouted ugly and generalized epithets, comprehensible only in their flailing nastiness and not because a serious listener might have actually what his competitor did, if anything to merit criticism"(CBSC Decision 02/03 0115, 2007).

The radio station had suggested that if people did not like what they heard on the air, they could sue the station and Montreal weather reporter Sophie Chiasson did just that after Fillion called her "cruche vide" or "empty headed." He said that she had "slept with men twice her age" and that her "size of her brain is not directly proportionate to the size of the bra." Chiasson's father testified during the hearing in Quebec's Superior Court and trembled with anger when he detailed what he heard:

"When he spoke about my daughter as a 'vacuum on four legs,' my mother, her grandmother, who is 79, wanted to know what it meant," Mr. Chiasson testified last week. "Hearing what was said on the air, that she performed fellatio to get a job, I was angry...That's when we said this had to stop." (Séguin 08 March 2005,A8)

Chiasson was awarded \$300-thousand dollars in damages and another \$40-thousand dollars to cover her court fees (Canadian Press 12 April 2005, A3). As a consequence of the civil suit, Fillion resigned as morning host at the radio station in March 2006 and in August 2006, he signed on with the XM Satellite Radio Service's French language radio station (Canadian Press 12 August 2006, F7). In September of 2006, CHOI was sold to Radio Nord for \$12-million and continues to operate on the air in Quebec City (Dougherty 12 September 2006, A7). Again, it would appear that the regulatory functions of the CRTC were relatively toothless. CHOI has never been taken off the air, despite the sanctions imposed upon it. Moreover, Fillion himself continues to push the envelope in radio programming without censorship on satellite radio.

Talk Radio

As I indicated earlier in this paper, information and talk radio formats sprang up in Canada on AM radio because of technological advances that improved the reception of FM stations and AM stations needed to find a new niche for itself in order to survive. Again, commercial considerations and not public altruism were behind the increased number of talk and information stations that began to appear across country on the AM dial. These stations continue to be successful for their corporate owners. According to the Spring 2007 Bureau of Broadcast Measurements placed talk radio programs number one in Winnipeg, Vancouver, and Edmonton. In 2006 in Winnipeg, talk radio CJOB is the most listened to station (*Winnipeg Free Press* 11 April 2007, D2). In Vancouver, CKNW topped the daily listening survey (Constantineau 11 April 2007, E1) and in Edmonton, all talk CHED was number one (Sperounes 11 April 2007, D3).

There are claims that talk radio originated in the United States in the 1950s with a program called "What's On Your Mind?" which ran out of Camden, New Jersey (Ellis and Shane 2004, 1369). In Canada, CBC began the first coast-to-coast open line talk show called "Cross Country Checkup in 1965" (Bergeron 2004, 292). Political talk radio

can be defined as "radio programs (usually sporting a call-in format) that emphasize the discussion of elections, policy issues and other public affairs" (Barker 2002,15). This compares to other types of talk radio which can include discussions about sports or involves conversations about music, parenting or other issues. In Canada, the major talk radio stations dedicate a good percentage of their broadcast hours to political talk, however, other talk categories are present, particularly sports call-in programs. The CBC, Canada's public broadcaster, offers talk radio that is quite political and offers not only a local and national perspective, but also an international focus, relying on news programming from international news outlets such as the BBC.

When the US government dropped the Fairness Doctrine requirement for radio stations across the US in the 1980s, it "paved the way for talk radio as we know it today. Neither hosts nor stations currently have an obligation to provide balance or voice to competing views" (Cappella et. al. 1996,7). This has resulted in a preponderance of conservative viewpoints. Talk-show host Blanka Cullum contends however that the conservative viewpoints of talk radio counter the liberal media bias found in the evening news and in late night television talk (Cappella et. al. 1996, 7). According to *Talkers*, a magazine dedicated to talk media, the top five most popular radio hosts in the United States are all conservative: Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, Michael Savage, Dr. Laura Schlessinger, and Laura Ingraham (Talkers).

Canadian talk radio mirrors that of the United States in that it is also quite conservative. However, those conservative points of view are buttressed to a large degree by the more left-leaning CBC. Again the commercial aspect of radio prevents talk radio hosts from finding the same degree of celebrity as do hosts like Limbaugh, Savage or Hannity. Simply put, Canada's population is not large enough to allow for the creation of these types of radio giants. Indeed, in Canada, there is only one truly national talk radio host: Corus Radio's Charles Adler.

Adler broadcasts out of CJOB AM radio in Winnipeg, but he is heard across the country on Corus stations. Like his American counterparts, Adler is clearly conservative leaning. A look at his website and blog at CJOB makes it clear that Adler is against increased taxes, for Canadian involvement in Afghanistan and skeptical about global warming. In May and June of 2007, his guests on his program have included Green Party leader, Elizabeth May, Saskatchewan Premier Lorne Calvert and Liberal MP Gerard Kennedy. It is clear that he is less patient with some of his guests. For example, on-line he runs excerpts of his program that is then edited to play up the entertainment value. In one of his interviews with the NDP's Defense Critic Dawn Black labeled a "smackdown." Black expressed her concerns about the guns used by the military and she called the guns huge. In what can only be called a rant, Adler mocks Black suggesting that he does not know why the NDP have a defense critic because "they don't believe in defense, seriously" (Adler). He went on to say that he would call the type of guns the NDP want dwarf guns, but then he would have the "dwarf interest group down my pie hole" (Adler).

Local radio hosts though through out Canada continue the conservative talk show tradition. In Calgary and Edmonton, Dave Rutherford rules the talk show airwaves on

CHQR and CHED for Corus, while Corus radio's Richard Cloutier hosts the mid-morning show on CJOB in Winnipeg and Tommy Schnurmacher hosts the nine to noon show on CJAD in Montreal for Standard. In Québec City, Gilles Proulx brings his own brand of talk radio to francophone listeners. All provide the iconic talk show with a clearly articulated conservative perspective. This drive for private talk show hosts to speak from a perspective may be seen as a continuation of the need to seek entertainment values in political discourse and is as indicated an obvious ratings winner. Hutchby suggests that talk show hosts have the requirement to take up counter-positions to respond to callers' points of view. He argues that

Hosts then might be said to engage routinely in the activity of constructing the caller's talk as "controversial," of finding in whatever the caller says resources for presenting a controversially contentious counter-position. This construction of controversy is one of the central, demonstrably oriented-top features of talk radio. (Hutchby 1992,674)

Good talk show hosts, according to Hutchby closely monitor what callers say in search of "potential arguables" (Hutchby 1992, 684). Further, O'Sullivan's analysis from the UK indicates that successful guests to private radio call-in programs "display an understanding of the style, tone and what constitutes appropriate content for the show" (O'Sullivan 2004,736). Thus, the format, the role of the hosts and the callers become formulaic in the production of a daily talk show.

The landscape of commercial talk radio in Canada is not only conservative, it is also overwhelmingly male. This also follows the American experience of talk radio which is also dominated by male voices. As Douglas outlines, talk radio hosts like Limbaugh and Stern are all "about challenging buttoned-down, upper-middle-class, corporate versions of masculinity that excluded many men from access to power" (Douglas 2002,485). Within the imagined talk show community beginning in the 1980s, it became very clear "who was included and who was excluded" (Douglas 2002, 488). It became normalized practice for hosts to insult and yell at listeners "like abusive fathers and tough callers knew how to take it. In fact, talk radio proved to be a decidedly white male preserve in a decade when it became much more permissible to lash out at women, minorities, gays, lesbians and the poor" (Douglas 2002,488). Given Adler's comments about the fear of having the "dwarf interest groups" down his "pie hole," it would appear that this masculinist style of discourse remains prevalent 20-years later (Adler).

Conclusion

Canadians can still rely on their radio stations to provide them with a Canadian perspective particularly with the continued strength of the CBC in providing radio programming across the country. However, it is becoming clear that convergence combined with the influence of infotainment and American-style talk radio has had an impact on the type of information available. Overall, the number of companies offering radio broadcast services has decreased as we see a rise of multi-media platform groups that offer economies of scale (Taras 2001, 70). This has created concerns that the few powerful companies will strangle creativity and the transmission of new ideas as well as public debate as they scramble to make a profit and keep their shareholders happy (Taras

2001, 78). The move started in the early 1990s to deregulate Canadian radio and allow for increased concentration has to a large degree mirrored similar moves in the United States and in Australia. In the United States, the decision to relax ownership limits was a way of allowing for increased competitiveness that would allow the ownership of "more stations to boost efficiency and save money due to program sharing, computerized station operations and the ability to access ever larger audiences" (Fairchild 1999, 554). Fairchild argues that in the US, this has fundamentally reduced the "number of voices available on radio ... and stifled almost all serious attempts to fostering diversity of ownership and information" (Fairchild 1999, 557) and the same case can be made in Canada.

At the same time, we see a "dumming down" of the information we received. Increasingly music format commercial radio stations provide less solid news information, instead relying on shorter newscasts or consolidated news casts from central news rooms combined with an increased emphasis on entertainment. News and information format stations on the other hand, also rely on ratings and vitriol to keep listeners entertained and engaged. This is backstopped to some degree by the CBC which works as an alternative to the commercialization of the radio market. However, the bottom line is that for the 30 percent of Canadians who rely on radio as their source of information, that information is being packaged as entertainment.

Finally, perhaps more frightening is the relatively tenuous hold both the CRTC and the CBSC have on controlling the type of discourse that is being heard on our Canadian airwaves. Canada does have requirements about what can and cannot be said on the radio, but the CRTC and CBSC have not been effective in yielding that type of control. Instead, when you look at the CHOI controversy in Québec City along with the earlier problems with Howard Stern in both Montreal and Toronto, market concerns were what drove the decision to change programming and not an overarching concern about broadcast ethics. Radio in Canada like other media is clearly in flux, with market forces controlling what information is provided and how it is provided. The economic conditions under which both private and public radio operates will continue to dictate the level of political discourse their listeners receive.

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