Urban Mediascapes and Multicultural Flows: Assessing Vancouver's Communication Infrastructure

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Abstract: This paper adopts a communication infrastructure model in mapping the flow and meaning of ethnic media in Vancouver and their interaction with local, national, and global conceptions of a public commons. A communication infrastructure consists of a “thick” social network of media and organizations, which create and disseminate everyday conversations and news to any given community. Without the existence of a sustainable communication infrastructure, communities cannot form and function. The intersection of social capacity and media infrastructure, then, becomes an important predictor of potential for democratic deliberation and political engagement. Presenting an empirical study of ethnic media in Vancouver, this article asks how well these outlets provide resources to construct inclusion in an urban setting. A more complex infrastructure was mapped than anticipated, but several blind spots were still found. A set of recommendations is made to expand the politics of inclusion and recognition of shared citizenship and civic engagement.

Keywords: Ethnic media; Ethnic diversity; Communication infrastructure; Multiculturalism; Media policy; Content analysis; Comparative media analysis

Resumé : Cet article adopte un modèle d’infrastructure communicationnelle pour examiner les flux et sens des médias ethniques à Vancouver ainsi que les interactions de ceux-ci avec des conceptions locales, nationales et mondiales de ce que serait un lieu d’échange public efficace. Une infrastructure communicationnelle se compose d’un réseau social « riche » composé de médias et d’organismes qui créent et diffusent les conversations et nouvelles de la journée à une communauté donnée. Sans l’existence d’une infrastructure communicationnelle durable, les communautés ne peuvent ni se former ni fonctionner. L’intersection entre les capacités sociales et l’infrastructure médiatique devient ainsi une mesure importante du potentiel que possède une communauté de susciter des engagements politiques et des débats démocratiques. Cet article, en présentant une étude empirique des médias ethniques à Vancouver, s’interroge sur l’efficacité de ces derniers à fournir des ressources...
favorisant l’inclusion en milieu urbain. La recherche a décelé une infrastructure plus complexe que prévue, tout en repérant plusieurs lacunes. L’article effectue des recommandations en vue d’améliorer les politiques d’inclusion et de reconnaissance de la citoyenneté partagée et de l’engagement civique.

*Mots clés* : Médias ethniques; Diversité ethnique; Infrastructure communicationnelle; Multiculturalisme; Politiques médiatiques; Analyse de contenu; Analyse médiatique comparative

Rival narratives of media history have accepted the proposition that communication infrastructures have always played a significant role in shaping the public’s imagination of a national community, shared citizenship, and common values (Curran, 2002). Yet study of the role of media in multicultural politics has not caught up with changes in the scale and geopolitical focus of that “community of communities.” Global migration has to a certain extent undermined the homogeneous nature of the geographical entity that we call a nation. With new cultures and subnations operating within the nation-state, a plethora of different forms of communication has emerged, which in turn may facilitate formation of new types of citizenship and diversity of citizenship practices (Sassen, 2001). Such increasing media pluralism challenges traditional conceptions of the public sphere—disaggregating it into a “mongrel” motley of public “sphericules” that do not operate in the formation of civic public opinion or mobilization of political action in the same ways (Fraser, 2004; Karim, 2002; Sandercock, n.d.). As institutions, then, media can play an important role in interpreting and enacting multicultural ideology, adapting and sustaining differences through democratic cohesion. It is our contention that multicultural media infrastructures in Canada must be critically and empirically examined for how these institutions “actually exist” (Brenner & Theodore, 2002). The research presented here is concerned with the role this “invisible” communication infrastructure—that is, the so-called “ethnic media”—plays in negotiating these institutions’ place in social relations and mainstream mediascapes. In response to a series of round tables among Vancouver journalists, community leaders, editors, and policymakers between 2005 and 2006, the co-authors assembled a multilingual team to map the sector in Vancouver.

In three phases, the research team mapped the ethnic media sector in Vancouver, analyzed the content of ethnic and mainstream media using content and discourse analyses, and finally, through a series of interviews with stakeholders, advanced a number of policy recommendations.

In this article, we present some of the key findings of our year-long research, discuss a number of key questions that emerged, and propose a multicultural communication infrastructure model. The model is predicated on two assumptions: that the spatial focus on infrastructure has to shift to the city level, which provides the first portal in multicultural adaptation, and that infrastructure shapes the potential for political action.

We start with an overview of contemporary debates on multicultural communication infrastructure in increasingly globalized cities. The second part of the article maps the ethnic media sector in Vancouver. In the third part, we present the findings from our content analysis of a cross-section of ethnic and mainstream
media in Vancouver. As an extension of our two assumptions, two lines of questioning emerge. First, do ethnic media present an “integrated perspective,” or are they acting as “separate enclaves?” What role do they play in the adaptation processes of immigrant communities by informing immigrants and addressing concerns relevant to them in Canada? Second, what is ethnic media’s role in fostering informed and civically engaged citizens?

**The multicultural communication infrastructure model**

Attention to infrastructure is a characteristic of institutional approaches to the study of media and politics. “Infrastructure” provides the basic structural foundations for a multicultural society, and it often functions “below the radar” of current political analysis. Reflecting a trend toward rehabilitating “neo-institutionalism” in political communication, a communication infrastructure model begins from the assumption that institutions shape political action (Lecours, 2005). In this view, the “institutional arenas” and the “institutional levels” (Marques & Santos, 2004) of the ethnic communities that both operate within and transcend urban settings are what facilitates the multilayered identity orientation and adaptation of immigrants in Western societies. The “institutional arenas” of ethnic communities are composed of immigrant or ethnic-minority organizations and local diasporic networks, as well as civil-society associations and local political institutions, all of which give the ethnic community member increasing access to the society through civic engagement. The “institutional levels” extend from the neighbourhood to the supranational level.

This model implies that deficiencies in representation in any quadrant, or in linkages across them, may stunt the degree of interaction, co-operation, co-ordination, distance, or trust within and across organizations and authorities. The Metamorphosis project at the Annenberg School for Communication has expanded upon the notion of horizontal storytelling networks across social groups and media actors. A well-functioning communication infrastructure, in their view, consists of a “thick” media and social-production system of outlets that create and disseminate everyday conversations and formal news, opinion, and commentary to any given community within a specific geographical region. Access to a supportive communication infrastructure in their language of origin is crucial for individual immigrants to build their sense of orientation and belonging in the so-called receiving society (Matei, Ball-Rokeach, Wilson, Gibbs, & Hoyt, 2000). The intersection of social capacity and media infrastructure, then, becomes an important predictor of potential for democratic deliberation around multiculturalism as a social form, ideology, or pattern of political engagement.

The Metamorphosis project’s model of “communication infrastructure” and Marques & Santos’ (2004) model of “participation space” are both rooted in literatures of cultural pluralism and the notion of a “differentiated citizenship” (Kymlicka, 1995, 2007; Kymlicka & Norman, 1994; Walzer, 1992, 2003; Young, 1989, 1990, 1995, 2000). According to this school of thought, to ignore particularistic group affiliations is to deny humans the right to engage in social, economic, and political processes as they see fit. Young (1995) argues that by the late twentieth century, the promises of the liberal model of citizenship had not been actualized. Despite the fact that many immigrants acquire full citizenship rights, many ethnic groups remain excluded from the bourgeois public sphere and are
reduced to second-class citizens (Young, 1995). Young argues that the solution partially lies in providing institutionalized means for the recognition and representation of different groups (1989).

In addition to the various immigrant, religious, or ethnocultural groups that may form, one type of ethnic organization plays a central role both in recognition and representation: the ethnic-controlled media. Political theorist Michael Walzer (1992) follows up on this notion and argues that “the civility that makes democratic politics possible can only be learned in the associational networks of civil society” (p. 104). It is in these networks that we internalize the idea of individual responsibility and “mutual obligation and learn voluntary self-restraint which is

Table 1
Institutional arenas and institutional levels: A two-dimensional participation space adapted from Marques et al. (2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARENAS</th>
<th>Immigrant Groups</th>
<th>Immigrant Associations</th>
<th>Civil Society</th>
<th>Political Institutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supranational</td>
<td>Diasporas; transnational networks</td>
<td>International federations</td>
<td>Political parties in sending countries; international religious organizations, international NGOs TRANSCANATIONAL MEDIA</td>
<td>UN; EU; consultative bodies (EU Forum); political institutions in sending countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>Immigrant communities and networks</td>
<td>Immigrant associations and federations; IMMIGRANT MEDIA; religious organizations</td>
<td>Political parties; human rights, anti-racist, etc. organizations; Church; trade unions; NATIONAL MEDIA</td>
<td>Political institutions; consultative council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal</td>
<td>Immigrant communities</td>
<td>Immigrant associations; IMMIGRANT MEDIA</td>
<td>Voluntary, entrepreneurial &amp; school associations (pupil, parents) CITY MEDIA</td>
<td>Municipal and parish political institutions; municipal advisory council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Immigrant communities</td>
<td>Immigrant associations</td>
<td>Residents, school, voluntary associations COMMUNITY MEDIA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
essential to truly responsible citizenship” (Glendon as cited in Kymlicka & Norman, 1994, p. 364). It is understood that Canada as a country with a multicultural policy adheres to the idea of a strong civic society, both for its native-born citizens and for immigrant communities. The receiving society’s “institutional structure” (including policies concerning immigrants), as well as its reactions to newcomers, are decisive for the integration process of immigrants. As outlined in Table 1, the “institutional structure” of the receiving society includes the media, and the media play an integral part as conditioning agents for the democratic involvement of immigrants.

Evocative of the early transactional theories of Karl Deutsch (1966), the multicultural communication infrastructure model implies that the intensity of communication flows is linked to political self-identity. But where Deutsch’s work focused almost exclusively on the nation-state, contemporary focus is shifting to the city. Changes in the ethnic composition of nation-states, the flow of immigrants, global capital, and communication models have shifted the geo-focus of struggles for social, political, cultural, and economic recognition from the nation to the “global city” (Sassen, 2002, 2005). Studies on global migration trends indicate that newcomers are more likely to settle in urban areas where communication infrastructures, commercial services, immigrant organizations, ethnic media, and so on are widely available for immigrant communities (Marques & Santos, 2004; Sassen, 2001).

The city presents a far more concrete space for politics than the nation. Nationally, politics need to run through existing formal systems, whether the electoral political system or judiciary (Sassen, 2002). Non-formal political actors are thereby more easily rendered invisible in the space of national politics. The space in the city, however, accommodates a broad range of political activities and issues (e.g., gay rights, immigrant and refugee rights, rallies, gatherings, community centres, etcetera). Much of urban politics is concrete, enacted by people, rather than dependent on the partisan, aligned, or formal bureaucratic processes of the nation-state. Informal economies; participation in local political institutions such as municipal boards, commissions, and councils; as well as cultural productions and self-expressions are part of the so-called local, urban experience of being an immigrant (Marques & Santos, 2004). According to Saskia Sassen (2002), global cities, with their transnational flow of culture and economy, have become venues for traditionally “unauthorized” segments of society to gain presence vis-à-vis institutions of power and vis-à-vis each other. These unauthorized segments are those people who are disadvantaged and discriminated against because of their ethnicity, gender, or sexual preference. Sassen (2004) argues that this signals “the possibility of a new type of politics centred in new types of political actors” (p. 656).

The new urban politics presupposes different modalities in the construction of public opinion. Rather than being constituted of one homogenous public sphere, global cities then become the playing ground of multiple smaller public spheres, or “sphericules,” which become the distributed nodal centres for civic discourse, and within which the ethnic communities can express thoughts, desires, and aspirations (Karim, 2002). These sphericules, according to Karim, operate in a “third space” distinct from the “hegemonic public sphere,” involving stories, values, and
attitudes from the country of settlement as well as the country of origin (p. 231). In these sphericules—often operating through interpersonal, group, or mass-mediated vehicles, such as autonomous ethnic media—minority groups find innovative solutions to their marginalization from the greater society. These sphericules provide not only a space for the ethnic groups to “achieve a visible presence,” but also “a means to engage in discourse about public affairs” (p. 232). Contrary to the potential negative connotations of sphericules, the multicultural model sees them as pro-social and a key part of adaptation under certain circumstances.

The ethnic media composing these so-called sphericules have been an emerging field of enquiry in both cultural studies and political-economy streams of media and communication research. In recent studies from the U.S. and Europe, mapping and identification of the functions of ethnic media are common (Bailey & Georgiou, 2007; Ball-Rokeach & The Metamorphosis Project Research Team, 2000; Ball-Rokeach, Kim, & Matei, 2001; Georgiou & Silverstone, 2005; Lin & Song, 2006). Browne (1996) points out that there are certain features that are common to ethnic media despite variations in multicultural politics and policies: ethnic media (or “indigenous” as he terms them), 1) rescue the language; 2) increase self-esteem; 3) combat negative images; 4) work for greater cohesiveness, and through this for political influence; 5) provide a visible and audible symbol for the ethnic society; 6) provide an outlet for creative production; and finally, 7) provide a source for employment for immigrant populations.

Other research has been cautious with using terms—such as “ethnic,” “indigenous,” or “minority” media—as a “bundling convenience” for policy and/or research purposes. Kosnick (2007) disapproves of such artificial categorization of media and argues that it in turn imposes categorical identities on ethnic groups that assume their own life. The ethnic media serving a particular immigrant community do not have one unified agenda; outlets have diverse ideological and editorial inclinations. Kosnick argues that through hegemonic forces, however, certain value systems and ideologies are brought to the forefront as common sense and representative of the ethnic community, while other values and ideologies are overlooked as deviant and unrepresentative of the community. Following the core tenet of multiculturalism, that is, “the right of minority groups to express their ethnic particularity” (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 15), immigrant communities of global cities have organized themselves along not only ethnic lines, but also along cultural, religious, linguistic, and ideological lines: for example, one can be Iranian, Muslim, of Kurdish dissent, and ideologically social-democrat. The multicultural expression of the self is layered and complex, and therefore it is not concentrated in just one meta-organization, e.g., “Iranian ethnic community.” From a political perspective, Bennett (1998) argues that citizens today are engaged in a different mode of politics that involves more transitory engagements with localized and loosely organized associations that address issues of personal concern.

Citizen participation in the political process has always necessitated processes of communication (Urry, 2000). While the theoretical and empirical links between the agenda-setting and framing roles of the media and ethnocultural political engagement are still unstable in Canadian political science (Soroka, 2002), the degree of participation of Canadian immigrant communities in public
debates and their level of engagement with political processes have been a central preoccupation of recent political study. Found to have higher naturalization rates than other countries (Kymlicka, 2007), Canadian immigrants have traditionally been thought to have significantly higher participation rates than those of native-born citizens (Howe, 2007). Older immigrants are more likely to participate in elections, political rallies, debates, et cetera than more recent immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2003). They often express higher levels of commitment than the native-born Canadian to paying taxes, learning the official languages, voting, informing themselves about political affairs, obeying the law, and so on (Kymlicka, 2007). According to the Ethnic Diversity Survey, 53% of those in the first generation of immigrants who had come to Canada since 1991 and were eligible to vote reported voting in the 2000 federal election (Statistics Canada, 2003). This proportion is increasing. Elections Canada reported that 64% of foreign-born Canadians voted in the 2006 federal election (Jedwab, 2006). Despite this significant increase, the immigrant voting rate remains lower than the average for native-born Canadians and immigrants who arrived before 1961 (the second/third-plus generation), which is around the 80% participation mark (Franklin, 2001). Nonetheless, some recent studies find that recent arrivals are less politically integrated than earlier arrivals and the native born (Howe, 2007), which may be a function of their lack of political knowledge or identification. There is as much as a 15% gap in turn-out for federal elections between recent immigrants to Canada and the native-born. Tolley (2003) argues such a gap is due to “differential access to the financial resources and social networks that are needed to win elections, a lack of knowledge or information on how political processes function, an inability to penetrate political parties, a lack of familiarity with political norms and party culture, discrimination, and linguistic and mobility challenges” (p. 15).

The media may be implicated in all of these barriers to newcomers. Canadian political scientist Paul Howe (2007) discusses the importance of ethnic media in the total communication environment:

If [socio-economic] dimensions of integration and their implications for political engagement merit further investigation, so too does another general characteristic of the [British and Canadian] societies: the media environment. It was suggested [in this article] that low levels of regular reading of mainstream British newspapers in certain ethnic communities could be largely explained by a preference among members of those communities for a language other than English, but another possibility must also be considered: namely, that certain ethnic communities tend to retain their native languages in part because of the widespread availability in their adopted country of high-quality sources in their native languages. The question naturally follows of whether there might be a significant difference between Canada and the UK in the degree to which ethnic media exist and have supplanted mainstream news sources for certain ethnic communities; and as a further line of inquiry, the extent to which changes taking place in one or both countries have been propelled by technological advances, rendering it easier to produce and deliver media products aimed at specific audiences. (p. 636)
Such concern raised by Howe may be well founded, since a 2006 syndicated study of 3,000 new Canadians in Montréal, Toronto, and Vancouver found that 31% of Chinese respondents read only in their own language, and 17% did not follow news in either their mother tongue or English. Nineteen percent followed news in two languages, while 33% relied only on English sources (data unavailable for other language groups; Murray, 2008). If such high proportions of recent immigrants are retaining the language and media of their country of origin, what are the implications for multiculturalism?

Multicultural communication infrastructure in a “not-so-global” city

Following Sassen’s (2002) observation of urban dynamics, we decided to see if many of the characteristics of global cities are recurrent in “not-so-global” cities as well. In other words, while Vancouver is not Canada’s hub for global commerce, finance, or media-production head offices, the ethnic composition of the city and the flow of cultural capital from inside and outside the country (facilitated by new communication technologies) are reminiscent of a miniature model of Sassen’s global city.

More than 40% of Vancouver’s population does not have one of Canada’s official languages as their mother tongue. In 2001, 725,655 people Vancouver residents were categorized as “visible minorities” (used here as defined by the federal Employment Equity Act), and roughly the same number spoke a non-official language as their mother tongue. The number for visible minorities rose 8.2% to 875,295 according to the 2006 census (see Figure 1), a significant increase and greater than that experienced in either Toronto or Montréal (Statistics Canada, 2006).

![Figure 1](image)

**Figure 1**

Vancouver's Ethnic Composition (Statistics Canada, 2006)

Visible Minorities in Vancouver (2006)

- Other 12% (103,990)
- Filipino 8% (78,890)
- Southeast Asian 4% (33,475)
- Japanese 4% (25,425)
- Korean 4% (44,830)
- South Asian 25% (207,165)
- Chinese 43% (381,535)
Given such a rapid rate of immigration under new immigration laws for skilled workers and professionals, investors, entrepreneurs, and self-employed persons, it is reasonable to conjecture that the media system will expand to match population growth, first in the non-regulated print areas and then in the regulated electronic media.

Methodology
The Vancouver study of ethnic media took place in three phases: 1) mapping of the ethnic media market, 2) comparative analysis of ethnic and mainstream media content (print and TV), and 3) recommendations for capacity-building and policy initiatives.

The mapping phase of the study was carried out by two different methods: 1) a survey of existing media directories of ethnic media in BC to measure the output and quality of the information available, and 2) a survey of the BC ethnic media market based on a designed questionnaire that sought to obtain organizational and operational information such as size, circulation/reach, years of operation, number of employees, and licensing conditions.

For the concurrent second phase of the study, the comparative analysis, a media archive of print and TV material was compiled from 27 media outlets (20 ethnic and 7 mainstream English-language outlets) over the course of three weeks. For print, the focus was on the first-page headlines, and for TV, the evening news program. The coding protocol for content analysis was designed to investigate the following areas: 1) manifest information about media content (topic, genre, news actors, news sources, geographical focus, et cetera), 2) latent information regarding orientation of locality and ethnic belonging (obtained through qualitative content analysis of news discourse), and finally 3) the economic aspects of media outlets, which were analyzed with questions regarding ad/content ratio, type of ads, and so on.

The final phase of the study—policy and development research—involved in-depth interviews and round tables with media stakeholders and community leaders/members. The questions were designed to inquire about three areas: 1) the current demographic, cultural, and socio-economic trends of each ethnic community group, 2) the current shape and performance of mainstream and ethnic media, and 3) suggested measures to improve conditions for ethnic media and the community in question. The research team offered the interviewees the chance to have the interview conducted in their language of choice.

Findings: Mapping the ethnic media landscape in Vancouver
The first phase of the research found 144 print and broadcast media outlets, serving 22 language groups. The level of competition in the sector is as high, if not higher, than that found in community media across Canada, and it is significantly healthier than in the mainstream media in BC. South Asian offerings were the most numerous, followed by Chinese media. Unusually high incidences were found of Korean, Farsi, and Filipino media. Indeed, it may be argued that the density of print outlets indicates a degree of media activity higher than is found in the level of development of ethnic organizations (including media companies) for later arrivals immigrant groups—Koreans, Iranian, and Filipino (Yu & Murray,
Just under 10 outlets—mostly regulated and established as special formats by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC)—were multilingual, such as Shaw’s Multicultural Channel or Channel M, recently purchased by Rogers Communication. A conservative estimate found just over 1000 employees in the sector. Most outlets were micro-enterprises or sole proprietorships, divulging little information about their operations. Few were integrated in business associations such as the National Ethnic Press and Media Council of Canada or the BC Press Council. Co-ventures between mainstream and single-language entities were on the increase: Canwest Global, for example, discontinued an error-fraught publication of The Vancouver Sun in Korean, in favour of a formal co-venture with the Korean Canada Express.

By medium type, there were 24 magazines, 80 newspapers, 15 radio stations, and 15 television stations operating as ethnic media in Vancouver. There were also 10 online publications and printed business directories in total. The status of many of these ethnic outlets is manifestly precarious. Churn is high. In the period of the study, 20 publications failed and 9 started up. Competition over the ethnic market within and among platforms available locally and internationally is increasing, and researchers witnessed a trend toward special-interest publications, especially in the Korean market.

By source, among publications where full information was available, 14 were international, 12 national, 7 regional, and most (33) local (Murray, Yu, & Ahadi, 2007). In terms of access, there is, at least in principle, diversity of resources at most levels of Marques & Santos’ (2004) framework (see Table 1). However, qualitative interviews with over 22 ethnic media and community stakeholders found that the undercapitalization of the sector hampered investment in original news collection and professional training for journalists and inhibited dialogue over different cultural news standards (Poon, 2006).

Vancouver’s ethnic media, then, have sprung up between the boundaries of at least three different policy fields regulated at the federal level that intersect with lived multiculturalism: print media policy, broadcasting policy, and competition policy. The first policy tradition is print news media, arguably a more local medium, with minimum laws restraining libel and hate that are consistent in all languages and a reasonably “hands off” ambit for operation arising out of Canada’s tradition of free speech. Following this logic, there is only minimal positive intervention in the print marketplace, creating the social pressure for self-regulation and social responsibility in lieu of regulatory action. As a consequence, there is a fairly well-developed set of regional press councils in Canada (and no national one). Yet none of the print ethnic media in BC belong to the BC Press Council and membership in the National Ethnic Press and Media Council of Canada (NEPMCC, dominated by executives from Toronto) is low, reflecting their less activist mandate than its U.S. counterparts.

The second increasingly implicated field given escalating cross-media ownership is broadcasting policy. In multicultural broadcasting policy, state intervention in the form of public broadcasting, media subsidy, or other measures tends to favour media in the language of the majority in most Commonwealth countries. Few public broadcasters (except for SBS in Australia) have separate, dedicated
services with subtitles in minority languages, although entities such as the BBC may create autonomous “diversity” units, in South Asian programming, for example. The CBC neither cedes news program time to diverse programming nor introduces blocks of current-affairs programs in other languages with subtitling. The absence of a multilingual newswire feed from Canada’s public broadcaster misses an opportunity to bring the quality of multicultural discourse in Canada up to the level seen in other countries. The CRTC’s policy on ethnic broadcasting—which includes conventional “multicultural channels” and specialty-language channels—has inadvertently introduced classes of immigrant services. Early entrants to ethnic specialty satellite licences (such as the Chinese Fairchild and Talentvision) have built thriving enterprises in Vancouver, successfully adapting their national satellite services to the local multicultural realities by negotiating local news inserts from their other major Chinese-Canadian markets. There are anomalies in treatment. Later arrivals such as the Asia Pacific Network (based in Toronto) operate under conditions of licence that preclude local news inserts from Vancouver, despite its large South Asian population. Furthermore, the CRTC decision to aggressively liberalize carriage of foreign news satellite services (brought about by the previous chairman after a cabinet directive to review its policy on imports) fundamentally limits the capacity of later-arriving language groups such as Korean or Farsi from building the domestic critical mass needed to start their own hyphenated-Canadian ventures—too much foreign competition may have a chilling effect.

The third and final area is competition policy, among media and within local markets. Ethnic media offer the last bastion of relatively healthy diversity of ownership, like the community newspaper sector that may be about to fall. The multicultural channels that arose from the unique Canadian licensing experiment of seeking new local owners across the country are now being merged into larger entities (such as Rogers). Clearly, the rise of independent local news and current-affairs producers to serve these multilingual ventures is an important element in a healthy communication infrastructure. The CRTC’s ethnic broadcasting policy has played a key part in stimulating Vancouver’s healthier balance of news from here and there in the multicultural media, compared with Los Angeles, which has a less balanced “global” supply, reporting lower levels overall of “local” content.

In order to investigate the capacity of ethnic media to bridge immigrant communities with local, provincial, national, and the international news, a subsample of 19 press and TV outlets in Vancouver was selected, representing four language groups: Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, and Punjabi. For a comparison between ethnic and mainstream English media, 7 mainstream outlets were chosen as well, bringing the total number of media outlets to 26. A three-week sample archive of media items was collected (generating a database of 1568 news items), on which a content analysis was performed. This analysis was intended to answer the following questions: Are there any differences among different language groups (among linguistic groups, and between English and non-English) in the geographic focus or qualitative orientation in their news coverage? Are these differences significant? If significant, what are the implications for multicultural adaptation?
As the discussion below will demonstrate, differences were indeed found. It was concluded that despite a dualistic “translocalism” in their content production, ethnic media in Vancouver do play a healthy role in bridging “here” and “there” (“host” and “home” communities).

Findings: Content analysis
The multicultural flow of media outlets in Vancouver is much more complex and expansive than anticipated prior to the research. The translocal flow of culture (Sassen, 2002) is indeed measurable: new information technologies (satellite and the Internet) are sources through which programs are imported and appropriated in whole or part for Vancouver’s market. The studies showed that one third of ethnic media content in the Vancouver area had its production origin outside BC. This implies a penetration of the Vancouver ethnic media market with material (news, entertainment, and advertising) that is not necessarily concerned with issues that affect the local aspects of the lives of immigrant communities. As Table 2 indicates, the geographical focus of news items is heavily (50%) on “international news from home country.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographic Focus</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<th>Punjabi</th>
<th>Korean</th>
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<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local-in-group</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local-out-group</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
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<td>National</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

This confirms a historical trend that has been identified by a range of scholars studying ethnic media in Canada and the U.S. (Ball-Rokeach, Kim, & Matei, 2001; Lin & Song, 2006; Matei, Ball-Rokeach, Wilson, Gibbs, & Hoyt, 2000). However, this Vancouver case study suggests that national and provincial news in ethnic media is underreported (10%). The question arising from these findings is how people who function exclusively in a unilingual third-language media environment (perhaps 30% of the immigrant population) get their daily provincial and national political news. While it is quite possible such news is transferred within and among families by personal influence (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1965), little is known about audience construction of meaning from political news among Canada’s immigrant population.

During the course of our study, a number of “hot topic” national news items were constantly covered in mainstream media, framed as “wedge issues” considered to be significant for the politics of the day in Ottawa: the Afghan detainee scandal (and Canada’s mission in Afghanistan in general) and the Air India inquiry. While a significant number of items in the mainstream media (on a daily
basis) covered these two issues, the ethnic media demonstrated a significantly lower interest in them. The data indicate that there is a division of news labour that applies in geographic focus or selection of news items for market appeal. English media showed front cover/lead line-up international news for 26% of the items, versus 50% for third-language media, suggesting there is a “complementary” competitive model between English and third-language media in segmenting international news values deemed important to audiences.

The numbers are not consistent across language groups. Korean media seem to have a greater emphasis on international in-group news or news from home (52%), while Cantonese media have significantly less focus on this news category: only 19%. One hypothesis is that immigrant communities that are relatively new to the country may still have a greater connection with the country of origin. The Korean community in Vancouver is part of the newer wave of immigrants and is therefore less organized as a community than the Cantonese immigrant group. The Korean diaspora has only 40 years of organizational history in BC (Yu & Murray, 2007). This may lead to a lower focus on local/national news and more focus on international in-group news.

Another interpretation derived from the findings on geographical focus is the level of intercultural awareness among ethnic groups in Canada, as indicated through news text (see Figure 2). Overall, 44% of ethnic media items show either local or international in-group awareness, versus 33% of leading news items that feature out-group geopolitical references. While the other three ethnic media groups dedicate between 25% and 34% of their total news coverage to news involving other international regions than their home country, Korean media devote slightly over 10% of their stories. Compared with the other language groups, Punjabi media also scored significantly higher than average in this respect, with 28% of their news dedicated to “local in-group” news compared with the 16% average for ethnic media, partly attributed to the news outlets’ dedication to targeting second-generation Indo-Canadians using the English language.

Figure 2
Intercultural awareness among different language groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Group</th>
<th>In-group Orientation</th>
<th>Out-group Orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cantonese</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjabi</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ahadi & Murray / Urban Mediascapes and Multicultural Flows, Vancouver 599
These results seem to indicate a heavy tendency for in-group orientation among items coded from the ethnic media archive. Cantonese and Mandarin media seem to have a higher out-group focus than the ethnic media average: 56% and 41%, respectively. Could this predominant in-group orientation of ethnic media be symptomatic of issues of integration and belonging? Are the journalists serving immigrant groups culturally introverted because of their orientation toward an “ethnic” sense of identity, rather than a “Canadian” sense of belonging? Our study seems to support such notions for at least two of the ethnic groups: Punjabi and Korean.

Table 3
Orientation of locality (percent of content)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographic focus</th>
<th>English Total</th>
<th>Non-English Total</th>
<th>Cantonese</th>
<th>Mandarin</th>
<th>Punjabi</th>
<th>Korean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home as Canada</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home as country of origin</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unidentified</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4
Orientation of identity (percent of content)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographic focus</th>
<th>English Total</th>
<th>Non-English Total</th>
<th>Cantonese</th>
<th>Mandarin</th>
<th>Punjabi</th>
<th>Korean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic: sense of belonging with the ethnic community</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic: sense of belonging to the dominant Canadian culture</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic-Canadian: sense of belonging to both communities</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannot be determined</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To probe orientation of locality, the context and symbolic voice or references to sense of belonging in Canada were also coded. Canada is positioned as “home” by 28% of news items in ethnic media, while 42% of news items conveyed the country of origin as “home” (see Table 3). Korean and Punjabi media have the highest affiliation with country of origin. Locality is not framed in any identifiable way in the majority of Cantonese and Mandarin items, leaving an open reading to the audience. Orientation of identity is absent in 55% of Cantonese and 72% of Mandarin media items (see Table 4). In contrast, Punjabi media headlines are characterized by references to hyphenated identity: “Indo-Canadian among youth honored [sic] by Surrey” (2007, p. 5); “Young Indo-Canadian stabbed at cultural event” (2007, p. 4); “Indo-Canadian couple held for keeping slaves” (2007, p. 5); “‘Stone-Wally’ refuses to help Indo-Canadian veterinarians facing systematic ‘racist abuse’” (2007, p. 1). In fact, consistent with...
other studies (Karim, 2002; Will, 2005), our study suggests that Punjabi news are generally more opinionated and politicized in their identity communicated than other third-language news. As found in our research, however, editorialization and personalization of politics may not fully engage the public in constructive debates. Instead, what was witnessed with some of the Punjabi media (which had the highest level of political coverage among ethnic media) was a reduction of political debates to personal attacks and name-calling. Instead of creating an atmosphere of inclusion and collegiality, this type of coverage of politics may in the long run result in the emergence of hegemonic voices, while alienating people who disagree not only with the ideological positions of particular outlets, but with the self-appointed representative authoritative sources “speaking” for that community.

The orientation toward ethnic belonging is also apparent in the advertising content of the ethnic media. Instead of “general-purpose ads” (automobile, beauty products, technology, et cetera), the ethnic print media seem to carry mostly highly localized service-oriented advertising of products and services that are particular to the ethnic community (see Figure 3).

![FIGURE 3](image)

**FIGURE 3**
Type of advertising (percentage of content)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Non-English</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Auto</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real Estate</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawyers</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supermarket</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While not bringing the “big money” to the table (compared with ads from large companies), this local focus of the advertising benefits the local immigrant communities in that ethnic media ad spaces (especially print media) are not only dedicated to commercial goods and services, but also to community announcements, cultural events, and activities of local ethnically particular organizations and associations. As heavily advertising-dependent enterprises, ethnic media are extremely vulnerable to the forces of the market: if advertising money does not roll in on a regular basis, no option is left but to fold. In recent years, however, big companies such as Telus and banks such as TD Canada Trust have begun to advertise in ethnic media, mainly in the TV sector, in the language of the ethnic communities. But print media are still almost entirely dependent for their finances on small-business and community-based advertising.
Discussion

In her discussion of how an immigrant sense of identity develops, Sassen (2002) argues that “orientation [of immigrants] ceases to be confined to one’s community of residence and one’s community of origin, and shifts towards multiple immigrant communities of the same nationality” (p. 232). In our view, this cross-section of Vancouver media content does not support such a shift to intercultural awareness. Do ethnic media serve an integrative role, based on accommodating difference? Despite increasing academic attention to this question, the answer would seem to be an equivocal “yes and no.” As social institutions, the ethnic media reinforce immigrants’ sense of “we-ness.” If this happens to the exclusion of others and lowers the incentives for individuals to expand networks to include other groups, then the answer is “no” (Zhou, Chen, & Cai, 2006). Our findings support the notion that successful forms of immigrant integration occur when newcomers retain a sense of their heritage culture and seek involvement in the larger society, suggesting that governments should encourage both forms of community (Benhabib, Shapiro, & Petranovich, 2007). But at the same time, our findings seem to indicate either a structurally imposed or voluntary sense of ethnocentrism among ethnic editors and journalists in setting news agendas.

The relatively low numbers of news items covering national news among all non-English outlets is a matter of concern for the following reasons: 1) many of the policies affecting the lives of immigrant communities (immigration, multiculturalism, et cetera) are tabled and executed on a federal level, yet news on these issues does not seem to be given priority; 2) the fact that Canada is currently led by a minority government elevates the possibilities of a pre-term federal election. Events that unfold on the national level may be the so-called defining factors in a parliamentary election and thus are necessary to cover on a regular basis. Moreover, English, French, and First Nations Canadians remain relatively isolated from the content of ethnic media. Karim (2002) argues that despite the fact that most South Asian print media are in English, the distribution points are limited to ethnic stores most native Canadians do not visit. We acknowledge, too, that there are important questions regarding the adequacy of civic information about provincial government and politics, since important spheres (education, labour, health) fall under provincial jurisdiction.

A difficulty in addressing the question of whether the ethnic media promote political involvement stems from the different understandings in academic and policy circles of what political involvement means. Coming to a new country is fraught with challenges of orientation and education, and then with the complexity of exercising democratic choice based on the political landscape of the new country. As a Vancouver editor of a Chinese media outlet stated in an interview conducted for our study, “New immigrants [from Guangdong province] are not familiar with three levels of government here. They know only one government system of China. We have to educate them.” This model of political participation can be classified as partisan and bound to electoral processes of democracy.

In interviews, it became apparent that Elections Canada has a significant program of outreach to ethnocultural communities in their respective languages, which becomes an important resource. However, other government departments
are constrained both during and between elections in their government communications to the official languages policy, which imposes a positive obligation on the provision of services in French and English only. However, as Karim (2002) argues, the voting power of large concentrations of minority ethnic groups in immigrant-heavy neighbourhoods becomes significant during elections: “When politicians attempt to reach these electorates in their own cultural idioms, ethnic media become key vehicles” (p. 239). In other words, during election time, the partisan system is fairly advanced: political parties are increasingly reaching out to the electorate and their media in other languages, while other “non-partisan” policy information is not available. This inconsistency is glaring.

What is also interesting to probe is whether government policy or daily politics have the centre stage when elections are not taking place and elected officials are carrying on with business as usual. Is it the case that the ethnic democratic engagement is subdued while governments are in office and resurfaces only during election times, when there seems to be some perception of intergroup rivalry for recognition? Of course, more comparative research is needed to probe this question. But if this is the case, perhaps alternative forms of democratic participation of immigrants, as suggested by “cultural pluralism” scholars Kymlicka (1995, 2007), Walzer (1992, 2003), and Young (1989, 1990, 1995, 2000), should be reviewed. A sort of differentiated democratic participation posits that individuals seek a collection of fulfillments mainly achieved through associations and relational networks along ethnic, religious, cultural, linguistic, and similar lines. As John Urry (2000) argues, citizen involvement in the political process in a post-national era characterized by globalization is not only contested within the nation-state, but also beyond it. The varieties of citizenship, as outlined by Urry, are cultural citizenship, minority citizenship, ecological citizenship, cosmopolitan citizenship, consumer citizenship, and mobility citizenship; these forms of citizenship are simultaneously performed by individuals in a society bound to protecting the basic civil rights of its citizens.7

The glue that makes any conception of cosmopolitan, intercultural, or “differentiated” citizenship sustainable is a “civil” public sphere, predicated on the assumption that as institutions ethnic media—as much as the mainstream media—should ideally operate on the premises of “social responsibility.” We found a general consensus among all interviewees for this study that ethnic media outlets need to cover local news in an attempt to raise intercultural awareness and assist new immigrants with integration: “The media should give out informative facts to people that can ease people’s living in Canada,” says the owner of a leading advertising group in Vancouver. Despite such good intentions, there are barriers to the amount of investigative or original reporting that can be done in ethnic media newsrooms. In a previous study of editorial policy, Shang Ping Han, editor-in-chief of the World Journal in BC, has stated that his paper strives to put local news on the front page, but due to “manpower” shortages, local coverage is often insufficient (Poon, 2006). Most participants interviewed for this study reinforce studies elsewhere that the interactive capacity to voice opinions not heard elsewhere (Georgiou & Silverstone, 2005; Park, 2005) is highly valued by new citizens and, indeed, is reflected in the known audience popularity of radio and
phone-in shows. In this respect, says Reynald Blion, director of the Mediam’Rad program at the Panos Institute in Paris, the ethnic media may be a breath of fresh air, “able to inject new viewpoints and broaden the agenda” (Mediam’Rad, 2006).

This sense of optimism seems to be countered by the changing social composition of the arriving media entrepreneurs. An interesting finding was that the South Asian, Iranian, and Korean interviewees all believed that some people started up media publications as money-making ventures, rather than from a desire to present a voice that was not heard. The editor-in-chief of an Iranian newspaper in Vancouver comments on this: “Iranian media, especially newspaper, has been mushrooming during the past 5 to 10 years. But many of these newspapers don’t have a social agenda. They think of their business as precisely a business through which they make a living.” The publisher of a Korean newspaper comments on the Korean community: “Korean newspaper owners out there would not have the best interests in serving the community. They are mostly business oriented.” This economic motive may have been heightened by neo-liberal immigration policies that promote free-market principles and idealize “model citizens” who will be self-sufficient, independent, and “highly skilled, well-educated, English or French-speaking, upper-class male immigrants” (Abu-Laban & Gabriel, 2002, p. 97). As a result, the new ethnic community media (ventures launched 2000 or later) are partially, if not entirely, run by immigrants with a neo-liberal sympathy under the business immigration program whose life aspiration in the new country continues to centre on “upward mobility” (Park, 2005). Furthermore, the apparent lack of financial and human capital in the market may lead to further reliance on less costly reproduction of news items from “home,” thus further limiting the market’s exposure to a good deal of local, provincial, and national news of “here.” There is, however, a sense of agency among journalists that needs to be addressed. The will to adhere to the social-responsibility hypothesis is present; however, the lack of institutional standards and infrastructure such as editorial standards, the shortage of trained multilingual journalists, and the lack of far-reaching networks with government bodies, institutions, and NGOs hinders some of the work of those media professionals who try to live up to the social-responsibility hypothesis. As our study indicates, then, ethnic media market realities and a changing immigrant demographic may undermine “responsible” practice.

The range of differences in ethnic media outlets’ legal status, approach, level of development, and visibility show how heterogeneous this universe still is. The mistake is to ignore them, as Canadian academic scholarship and multicultural and communication policy analysts have done. As Lin & Song (2006) note, “[h]owever narrow, inexperienced or undercapitalized these fringe newspapers might be, they nonetheless offer a reflection of group experiences” (p. 363).

**Recommendations: Research, capacity-building, and policy**

In terms of research on ethnic media and their role in society, it is evident that more comparative study is needed to investigate how they “actually exist” in Canada. In our study, we mainly focused on ethnic media produced and disseminated throughout urban settings in Vancouver. This city-centric model of ethnic media production and consumption overlooks rural or less-populated cities’ ethnic communication infrastructure. In addition, for a better understanding of the
Canadian ethnic media landscape, the three major immigrant centres—Toronto, Montréal, and Vancouver—need to be studied comparatively. Also lacking from our research is study of the impact of ethnic media on their audiences. What role do they play in the construction of ethnic-civic identity among new immigrants? We acknowledge that ethnic media service a segmented and diverse audience. In our content analysis of media text, we witnessed a heavy reliance on entertainment news, especially in the Punjabi media. Could this be a selling pitch to the youth market, or is this part of the larger trend of media adopting an entertainment or “infotainment” logic? Focus groups, surveys, and interviews, as well as observational research of ethnic media’s points of distribution, are needed to better understand media consumption and production trends.

High on the research agenda is also textual analysis of media coverage of particular events, debates, or so-called “breaking news.” For instance, it would be interesting to investigate ethnic media’s “behaviour” during election times to better understand the type of issues that get covered, as well as how politicians and policies are addressed in the ethnic media. Perhaps the most important recommendation is that research in this field should also move toward institutionalization, meaning that media measurement research as carried out by Nielsen and BBM on mainstream media should also be adapted to include ethnic media, which are hampered in their capacity to provide sufficient information about their readerships to attract advertisers. Another major problem with studying ethnic media is lack of access to back issues of the print press. There seems to be little done by data preservation institutions—media archives, libraries, et cetera—in terms of archiving ethnic media material. It is surprising that Vancouver Public Library’s central branch does not have back issues of the major ethnic press in town (Ming Pao Daily News, Sing Tao Daily, et cetera) in any format. The combined circulation of these newspapers surpasses some of the mainstream media in BC. Yet no preservation policy has been adopted to facilitate research in this area.

When it comes to capacity-building for the sector, there are several issues to be considered. There is an urgent need for dialogues between different ethnic and mainstream media reporters, editors, and community advisory boards to explore different editorial practices. Along the same line, courses in journalism covering diversity and ethnic particularity need to be developed in order to encourage the development of standards of practice in intercultural reporting. In order to serve the local ethnic community, ethnic media need to have a better access to executive and legislative branches of government. Press releases coming from these institutions must reach all media outlets, not only the mainstream media, meaning that translations of press releases and abstracts of reports in key minority languages need to be made available. Many will resist such movement beyond official languages policy in government communications, but the precedent is already set in party campaign strategy and in certain policy fields (e.g., local health advisories). Careful policy thought will have to be given to reinterpreting the old modernist national underpinnings of our public institutions. Is it time for the CBC to offer a multilingual news feed to ethnic media? Should the Canadian innovation in the multicultural channel be broadened to include subtitles as it is at SBS in Australia? The prospect for a renewed or more active provincial and/or
federal ethnic media association needs to be explored. Such an umbrella organization can facilitate dialogues with the governing powers on municipal, provincial, and federal levels and assist the ethnic media sector in furthering their cause. In a direct way, of course, federal and provincial governments remain the largest advertisers in Canada, so attention is focusing on requiring them to direct a “fair share” of advertising revenue to ethnic media. Problems remain, since this sector is disadvantaged in the quality of audience or market penetration data it can bring to bear in advertising sales. The National Ethnic Press and Media Council of Canada has unanimously argued for greater access to government ad spending, and in a move designed to help the financial viability of ethnic media, the Senate committee’s final report on the future of the news media also argued for broader access to government placement of advertising. Such institutional agglomeration facilitates the recognition of ethnic media as an independent and important sector of our country’s media landscape.

Policies could push for the existing “mainstream media sector” of society to accommodate the ethnic sector—with more international reportage of interest to the largest communities, more representation of different ethnicities in reporters’ and editors’ offices, and more responsiveness to unintended “racialization” of different groups. At the same time, Canada needs to revisit its assumptions about multicultural communication infrastructure. It is our view that the language addressing ethnic media in society needs to be revisited. Referring to ethnic media as “minority-language media” is somewhat misleading and problematic. In the case of Greater Vancouver, for example, the Chinese community is hardly in a minority position. Yet in policy and academic circles, talk about “minority involvement in politics” or “minority participation in civic affairs” is still common. Such language automatically subordinates certain groups to dominant discourses in society and elevates other groups to positions of power. In order to better address some of the policy blind spots with regard to ethnic media, it is our understanding that the dynamics of dominant/alternative relationships and the language that speaks to them should be re-addressed.

Conclusion
By introducing a multicultural communication infrastructure model, it is possible to systematically explore the intersection of social capacity and media infrastructure, and then to identify the potential for democratic deliberation around multiculturalism as a social form, ideology, or pattern of political engagement. This study has highlighted certain shortcomings of the ethnic media in constructing the “nation” in their news during our period of study, but simultaneously, it argues that ethnic media play a significant role in aiding the communities and their members in their quest for recognition and integration in a new country. This is done not only through the everyday services, products, and events that are advertised in the ethnic media, but also by complementing the mainstream media in highlighting local issues of concern to the ethnic communities, as well as by covering international news from both the home country of origin and elsewhere. The aim of this research is to tell the story of the ethnic communication infrastructure in Vancouver as it is. Ethnic media are neither a source of division and isolation nor a success story for integrative policies. As our study demonstrates, ethnic media
play a significant role as “public sphericules” (Karim, 2002) through which non-mainstream and alternative voices can be heard. At the same time, the lack of intercultural awareness and the tendency toward cultural introversion are areas of concern, as are operational obstacles.

In Marques & Santos’ (2004) “two-dimensional participation space,” “differentiated citizenship” is enacted through participation in different levels and arenas of society. Such participation can only be made possible through ethnic media as disseminators of information to the community. Ethnic media play an integral part in the bottom-up mobilization of minority voices, offering micro-level enactment of the freedom granted by the principles of Canadian multicultural policy on the question of maintenance of particularity. One of the major challenges facing ethnic media, apart from economics and labour, is to be acknowledged in policy and academic circles as an institution, parallel to the mainstream media, serving a significant segment of society with their day-to-day news. We hope pilot studies like this one work toward granting the ethnic media sector a significant degree of visibility and legitimacy and elevate its constituents’ status from outlets operating on the margins to recognized institutions. There is no magic formula for success in creating a sustainable multicultural communication infrastructure. Instead, ethnic media should be seen as a work in progress. Their interaction with mainstream media has the potential to expand the politics of inclusion and recognition of shared citizenship, mutual respect for difference, and civic engagement in Vancouver’s mediascape.

**Acknowledgments**

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**Notes**

1. The Annenberg Metamorphosis project at the University of Southern California included a large-scale survey collecting basic measures of time spent with various media, media connectedness, membership in organizations, and subjective and objective dimensions of belonging. It found that strong connections to community media targeted to particular ethnic groups or residential areas generally have positive effects on belonging, but that placing too much importance on country-of-origin news undermines the sense of belonging to a new geographical place.

2. Based on a national average, 1960 to 1995. In the most recent Canadian federal election of 2008, however, the overall voter turnout was 60% (Elections Canada, 2008).

3. However, a case can be made (referring to *Little Mosque on the Prairie*) that the CBC is progressing on diversification of its entertainment programming in English faster than private broadcasters are, despite an acknowledged need to correct the underrepresentation of Canada’s multicultural and multiracial reality identified by the Canadian Association of Broadcasters’ 2004 self-study of diversity (Cavanagh, 2004).

4. The sale of the successful Channel M in Vancouver to Rogers has profound impacts on the autonomy of local news production. It is often argued that rationalization of licences may, in some cases, lead to greater editorial investment in high-value news and investigative journalism; however, the precedent set by English news has not been stellar. The number of foreign-news bureaus has decreased rather than increased with concentration of Canadian ownership, despite globalization of trade and people flows.
5. While content analysis has a checkered reputation among social scientists, it is a useful tool in mapping flow and direction of news sources. The content protocol was supplemented with discourse analysis of headlines and article text.

6. How ethnic communities regard themselves in terms of belonging to the larger Canadian society is a complex problem in operationalization. The research team looked for references in the text that indicate sense of belonging and participatory citizenship. For instance, are hyphenated references to identity (e.g., Indo-Canadian, Chinese-Canadian) being used? In stories on government politics, is Mr. Harper referred to as “the Canadian Prime Minister” or “the prime minister”?

7. These civil rights are outlined by Penninx, Kraal, Martiniello, & Vertovec (2004) as follows: (a) legal-political rights, (b) socio-economic rights, and (c) cultural-religious rights.

8. The Canadian Library Association is working on remedying this.

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