Same-Sex Marriage, Social Cohesion, and Canadian Values: A Media Analysis

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ABSTRACT This article considers issues of social cohesion, national identity, and national values as they appeared in Canadian newspaper coverage of the same-sex marriage debate between September 2003 and the federal election of June 2004. Media reports in Canada about the issue of same-sex marriage reflected a range of reactions. For some, same-sex marriage was a symbol of fracture, of a split in the country over core values—a split that could undermine the very commonality that makes Canada a society. For others, same-sex marriage was an affirmation of the high value Canadians place on equality and diversity. This article examines the roles played by newspapers in their coverage of same-sex marriage as it relates to Canadian values and social cohesion.

KEYWORDS Content analysis; Democracy; Mass media theory; National identity; Newspapers

On June 10, 2003, Canadian courts struck down the opposite-sex definition of marriage as unconstitutional, and Canada became the fourth country in the world to legally recognize the marriages of same-sex couples (Larocque, Chodos, Waterhouse, & Blair, 2006). This article considers issues of social cohesion, national identity, and national values as they appeared in Canadian newspaper coverage of the same-sex marriages.
marriage debate between September 2003 and the federal election of June 2004, in which same-sex marriage was an important issue.

In September 2003, a few months after the Ontario Court of Appeal’s decision to strike down the opposite-sex definition of marriage as unconstitutional, *The Economist* sparked a national and international conversation about Canada’s values by proclaiming the court’s decision to be indicative of a “new spirit” of social liberalism in Canada (“Canada’s New Spirit,” 2003, p. 13). Media reports about the issue of same-sex marriage reflected a range of reactions. For some, same-sex marriage was a symbol of fracture, of a split in the country over core values—a split that could undermine the very commonality that makes Canada a society. For others, same-sex marriage was an affirmation of a Canadian identity and the high value Canadians place on equality and diversity. In this article, I examine the roles played by newspapers in these debates and in the construction of Canadian identity.

Social cohesion, national identity, and national values have been issues of particular concern to Canadian governments throughout this country’s short history. A Canadian identity must seemingly be actively produced, constructed, and protected in the face of the powerful cultural and economic influence of the United States, the vast Canadian geography, and the diverse cultural backgrounds of Canadian citizens (Nimijean, 2001). Paradoxically, however, an identity of diversity and tolerance has also crystallized. Perhaps this is what Prime Minister Paul Martin meant when he said that Canada is “the world’s most post-modern country” (Samyn, 2004, p. A1).

Shared values, a sense of common identity, and a sense of belonging to the same community all contribute to, and are different aspects of, social cohesion (Jenson, 1998; Berger-Schmitt, 2000). Shared values alone do not alone create social cohesion; a trust that conflicting interests can be mediated or overcome is also an important factor. In Canada, social cohesion has been defined as “the ongoing process of developing a community of shared values, shared challenges and equal opportunity within Canada, based on a sense of trust, hope and reciprocity among all Canadians” (Canada, 1999, p. 22).

While the production of social cohesion is often a focus of government actors and programs, the media and newspapers can also play an important role. Newspapers have roles both in promoting shared values and in processing conflicting interests through information-sharing and debate. This article draws on C. Edwin Baker’s work to examine the roles played by newspapers in the debates about same-sex marriage and Canadian values.

Social cohesion faced increasing challenges in many Western countries as a result of economic policies throughout the 1980s and 1990s and the recent economic crisis, all of which have caused greater income disparity and social polarisation, high levels of unemployment, and a general sense of insecurity among citizens. These economic changes were preceded by social changes perceived by many as challenging what had been seen as the most important site of social integration—the family:

In Western industrial societies of the 1950s and 1960s, paean were being sung to the family. In West Germany it was enshrined in the Constitution and placed
under special state protection; it was the recognized model for everyday life and the dominant sociological theory regarded it as essential to a functioning state and society. But then came the student and women’s movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s, with their show of resistance to the traditional structures. The family was exposed as ideology and prison, as site of everyday violence and repression. (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, p. 85)

As the traditional family came into question, new forms of family arose more frequently:

[The traditional family] is losing the monopoly it had for so long. Its quantitative significance is declining as new forms of living appear and spread—forms which (at least generally) aim not at living alone but at relationships of a different kind: for example, without a formal marriage or without children; single parenting, conjugal succession, or same-sex partnerships; part-time relationships and companionships lasting for some period in life; living between more than one home or between different towns. These in all their intermediary and secondary and floating forms represent the future of families or what I call the contours of the “post-familial family.” (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, p. 98)

Social cohesion in Canada was also under threat for additional, particularly Canadian, reasons. The internationalization of Canadian trade and investment, the failure of the Charlottetown Accord, and a near win for Québec nationalists in 1995 had led to renewed concerns about Canadian identity and social cohesion (Nimijean, 2001).

According to Richard Nimijean, the response on the national level to the complexification of identity has been “to move away from defining Canada and Canadians in purely ethnic terms. Rather, the focus is on understanding and defining values that can be seen as Canadian” (Nhimijean, 2001, p. 7, emphasis added).

On June 10, 2003, the issue of the “post-familial family” came to a head in the “most post-modern country” when the Ontario Court of Appeal struck down the opposite-sex definition of marriage as unconstitutional. The legal institutionalization of same-sex marriage meant very different things to different people. Of particular concern was the issue of the relationship between same-sex marriage and “Canadian values.” For some, same-sex marriage symbolized a split in the country over core values—a split that could undermine the foundations of Canadian society:

Pastor Willy Reimer of the Sunwest Christian Fellowship said marriage predates Canada, its political leaders and the courts and therefore shouldn’t be redefined to include same-sex couples. “It’s an assault on common sense and the values of society,” he said. (Ridgen, 2003)

For others, it was a symbol of pulling together, of the affirmation of the high value Canada and Canadians place on equality, and of an ability to accept diversity as core to Canada’s national identity and key to the country’s social cohesiveness.

We believe this bill reflects true Canadian values—it supports the rights of gays and lesbians to marry, but also upholds religious freedom. (Sims & Dewhirst, 2003, emphasis added)
From same-sex marriage and a “who cares?” approach to smoking, if not growing or selling dope, Canada is developing its unique set of defining values. (Travers, 2003, emphasis added)

This discourse focused on values as being central to the Canadian identity. However, the differing views expressed in the two quotes above highlighted two very different conceptions of which values were central.

**Social cohesion: Two views**

As Jane Jenson (1998) observes, social cohesion can arise out of shared values, or from processes that accept or accommodate difference with the aim of creating a sense of belonging. The methods of orchestrating these two very different conceptions of social cohesion vary considerably. Too much emphasis on shared values can lead to exclusion and therefore to the fragmentation of societies. On the other hand, too much emphasis on fostering a sense of belonging through fast-paced social change and accommodation of large and significant cultural or social differences can lead to a sense of community that is vague or non-existent. As Jenson pointed out in her 1998 study *Mapping Social Cohesion: The State of Canadian Research*:

Cohesive communities can suffer from too much “bonding.” One can be made only too aware that one is “not from the neighbourhood” and therefore an object of suspicion, that one is not “from the old gang” and therefore an outsider. Therefore, the first question that arises is whether the decision to increase social cohesion by stressing the need to share values may not actually reduce the space for viable compromise. More concretely, can citizens’ identities be both varied and multiple, without threatening social cohesion[,] or is adherence to one national vision necessary? (p. 36)

Further, Jenson wrote:

Only some theoretical approaches identify social cohesion—defined as shared values and commitment to a community—as the foundation stone of social order. Other traditions privilege other mechanisms and put the accent on institutional processes and conflicting interests more than on values. (p. 13)

During the debate over same-sex marriage there was a rush in two different directions: calls for the retrenchment of shared values, and calls for conflicting interests to be fully accommodated and played out in institutional processes. Despite the fact that, officially, the “Canadian Way” was portrayed as accommodation—“We have established a distinct Canadian Way, a distinct Canadian model: Accommodation of cultures. Recognition of diversity” (Canada, 2000, in Nimijean, 2001, p. 17)—both paths were portrayed in newspapers as the “Canadian Way,” as being fundamental to the Canadian social order. There were calls for shared values: shared values of traditional family, and shared values of tolerance and respect for diversity. There was also encouragement of conflict in the form of debate, viewing this debate as the foundation of Canadian democracy, and calls encouraging the management of interests by institutions—by the courts and by Parliament:

Prime Minister Paul Martin said he had wrestled with the issue, but did not believe Canada could have “two classes of citizens.” “I think we are a very
mature nation, I think we can undertake that kind of debate [over same-sex marriage],” he said. (“Canada’s Supreme Court Lifts Final Barrier,” 2004)

One newspaper article stated:

A robust parliamentary debate on the nature of the country’s values is certainly desirable. (Sossin, 2004, p. A20)

One part of the responsibility for social cohesion was perceived to be at the level of the federal government. The stance that the federal government took to affirm same-sex marriage and to ensure that the definition of marriage would be consistent across the country attested to this (“Canada’s Supreme Court Lifts Final Barrier,” 2004). On June 17, 2003, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien and Justice Minister Martin Cauchon accepted the Ontario Court of Appeal’s decision on same-sex marriage and announced that the federal government would introduce national same-sex marriage legislation.

The Canadian federal government has traditionally taken a strong interest in fostering national and social cohesion. However, Michel Foucault has argued that the importance of the state has often been overestimated:

The state, no more probably today than at any other time in its history, does not have this unity, this individuality, this rigorous functionality, nor, to speak frankly, this importance; maybe, after all, the state is no more than a composite reality and mythicized abstraction, whose importance is a lot more limited than many of us think. (Foucault, 1991, p. 103).

Foucault, instead, placed primary importance on “the ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power” (p. 102). The power to manage the population “in its depth and its details” is invested in the hands of “institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics,” (p. 102) rather than in the hands of the state alone. The voice of the government in promoting the accommodation approach thus intermingled with, echoed, and contradicted many other voices.

The role of newspapers

One of the forums for the generation of shared values, as well as the processing of conflicting interests, is the newspaper. According to C. Edwin Baker, newspapers perform a number of functions in democracy, from promoting shared values to processing conflicting interests. According to liberal-plural conceptions of democracy, disparate groups are engaged in struggles as a result of fundamentally conflicting interests, which must, ultimately, be balanced. Media are an important part of the process in which groups with conflicting interests take part in political struggle. Media provide information to people and groups, alerting them when their interests are at stake and mobilizing political action. Here, media are often partisan; they promote or cater to certain sets of shared values. The media not only alert citizens when their interests are at stake; they also alert politicians as to the content and strength of citizens’ demands (Baker, 2002). In this context, the newspaper becomes an important tool for citizens and the state, not simply in disseminating information about issues and events, but also as a source of in-
formation about groups’ ideas surrounding their own identities and values (Baker, 2002).

The press can also be an important site, within democracies, for processing conflicting interests. Unlike liberal-plural conceptualizations of democracy, the republican ideal views groups as being capable of coming, ultimately, to a conception of the common good. The media, in this view, provide important sites for reflecting upon and processing issues, through which, ideally, a common good can be identified. It is important, then, that media involve and engage the broadest audience with comprehensive coverage of issues pertaining to all groups and issues, that the media are seen as including voices from all political affiliations, and that media provide a forum for the discussion of opposing views (Baker, 2002).

Baker acknowledges that in the reality of complex democracies, the media can play all of the above roles, sometimes acting to alert partisan groups when their interests are at stake, playing a role in helping to balance conflicting interests by allowing different voices to be heard, and also creating a site for reflection and the identification of the common good. Some media also support “groups’ internal discursive and reflective needs for self-definition, cultural development, and value clarification” (Baker, 2002, p. 150). This development role is generally played by newspapers (and other arts and media) internal to particular groups (Baker, 2002).

Newspapers, in the Canadian debates over same-sex marriage, played many of the roles outlined by Baker. The same-sex marriage issue can be seen as a discursive struggle over values and over Canadian identity. It is important, then, to study the processes taking place in newspapers in order to gain insight into the actual functions being performed as Canadian media act as a site of struggle over and construction of conceptualizations of the Canadian identity. The newspaper must be seen in its full complexity—in the multiple roles it takes on as a part of processes that work to create various types of social cohesion, and as a site for a variety of voices that are, themselves, engaged in these processes.

Research questions
This discussion brings us to a number of researchable questions explored in the remainder of this article. First, I take an introductory look at the newspaper coverage of the same-sex marriage issue as it was associated in the news with Canadian values, looking in particular at:

- the contexts of/occasions for the references to same-sex marriage in association with Canadian values;
- the associations made (positive or negative) between same-sex marriage and Canadian values in Canadian newspapers over time; and
- the type of coverage dedicated to the same-sex marriage/Canadian values issue.

A number of useful research questions can then be posed around these issues. I have already suggested a few:

- What roles did newspapers play in their coverage of the same-sex marriage/Canadian values issue?
- Did specific newspapers play specific roles?
Alongside my examination of the roles of the newspapers themselves, I look at the roles played by other individuals and institutions in the processes taking place within the pages of the newspapers:

- Which voices are seen participating in the discussions of same-sex marriage and Canadian values?
- What roles do these voices play?

Following a discussion of my methodology and hypotheses, I describe my findings on these questions.

Methodology
To examine the Canadian newspaper content on same-sex marriage, I first identified articles dealing with the topic of both Canadian values and same-sex marriage. To do this, I used three sources of full-text newspaper articles: factiva, Lexis-Nexis, and Eu-reka.cc. My search strategy focused only on explicit references to both same-sex marriage and Canadian values. In choosing this strategy, I rejected two other possible strategies. First, I could have chosen a broader search strategy, searching on all articles referencing same-sex marriage. A search strategy that focuses only on “same-sex marriage” without specific references to “values” returns 423 articles in factiva during the selected time frame. Although this strategy would have been useful in providing a broader perspective on the types of associations that were being made between same-sex marriage and Canadian values, and although it would not have excluded implicit associations that were made, I rejected this approach; my main reason for rejecting this strategy was that my aim was to focus only on explicit associations that indicated active, conscious construction of and struggle over Canadian values.

Second, I could have included associations between same-sex marriage and a broader range of values, either searching simply on the term “values” or including in my search string terms such as “Christian values” or “family values.” A simple inclusion of the term “values” in my search string, for example, returns articles referencing “family values,” “traditional values,” or “moral values,” as well as articles referencing the values of a specific group: the “values” of a political party, “Christian values,” “straight values,” or “middle-class values,” rather than references only to “Canadian values.” I rejected this strategy as well, since my focus is specifically on the construction of national values rather than on “universal” values, family values in general, or the values of specific cultural or religious groups. In particular, I decided not to search using the term “family values” because it is a category of values that is wider and more encompassing than “Canadian values.” “Family values” is a category that crosses national boundaries, whereas “Canadian values” references values seen as specific to Canada. I did include, however, references to “societal values” where this reference to “society” could be read to mean “Canada.” I also included references to terms such as “cultural values,” “constitutional values,” and “Charter value.”

My factiva search strategy eliminated sources that are not regular print newspapers (Broadcast News, Reuters, CP, AP, globeandmail.com, and CTV News transcripts):

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((societ* w/5 values) or (Canad* w/10 values) or (social w/5 values) or (cultur* w/5 values) or (constitution* w/5 values) or (charter w/5 values))
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I limited my results to the dates between September 1, 2003, and the end of the federal election campaign at the end of June 2004, as well as to the geographical region of Canada.

My search encompassed articles from the following Canadian newspapers, which factiva provided in full text:

- Calgary Herald
- Lethbridge Herald
- The Cambridge Reporter
- Montreal Gazette
- The Edmonton Journal
- National Post
- The Globe and Mail
- Ottawa Citizen
- Guelph Mercury
- The Toronto Star
- The Hamilton Spectator
- The Vancouver Sun
- The Kitchener-Waterloo Record
- Winnipeg Free Press

Other international newspapers are also indexed by factiva.

This search returned 117 articles. Of those articles 60 referred to same-sex marriage in relation to Canadian values. These 60 were included in my sample. (The other articles either did not refer to Canadian values at all, or their references to values bore no relationship to discussions of same-sex marriage.) Forty-eight of those 60 articles were from Canadian newspapers; the remaining 12 were from international newspapers. Most of my analysis is based on the Canadian articles.

I used an equivalent search strategy in Lexis-Nexis, a service that allowed me to encompass articles from the Sun newspaper chain in my search:

- ((societ*/w/5 values) OR (Canad*/w/10 values) OR (social/w/5 values) OR (cultur*/w/5 values) OR (constitution*/w/5 values) OR (charter/w/5 values)) AND ((“same-sex” w/5 marr*) OR (lesbian w/5 marr*) OR (gay w/5 marr*) OR (equal w/5 marr*))

I limited my search to Sun newspapers under the “World News” and “North/South America News Sources” categories: “Calgary Sun, The” OR “Edmonton Sun, The” OR “Ottawa Sun, The” OR “Winnipeg Sun.” This search returned two articles, both of which were included in my sample.

Finally, I made an identical search in Eureka.cc, encompassing Canadian French-language newspaper articles. This search returned 13 articles referring to same-sex marriage in relation to Canadian values from Le Devoir, La Tribune, Le Soleil, and Le Droit:

- ((societ%/5/valeur*) OR (Canad%/10/valeur*) OR (sociale%/5/valeur*) OR (cultur%/5/valeur*) OR (constitution%/5/valeur*) OR (charte%/5/valeur*)) AND ((“mêmesex”%/5/mari*) OR (lesbienn%/5/mari*) OR (gai%/5/mari*) OR (homosexuel%/5/mari*) OR (égal%/5/mari*))
To answer my first set of research questions, regarding the contexts of/occasions for the references to same-sex marriage in association with Canadian values, the associations made between same-sex marriage and Canadian values in Canadian newspapers over time, and the type of coverage dedicated to the same-sex marriage/Canadian values issue, I performed a quantitative content analysis of the articles returned by these searches, analyzing articles’ content over time, counting the references in articles to Canadian values and same-sex marriage, subdividing the references by type and context, and analyzing the data according to which newspapers and sections of the newspaper references appeared in. This analysis provides an overview of the newspaper coverage.

I attempted to answer my second set of research questions, about the role played by newspapers in their coverage of same-sex marriage and Canadian values, through an analysis of the viewpoints represented in the newspapers and the positioning of the viewpoints within the papers. Answers to the third set of research questions, about the roles of the people whose voices are portrayed in the newspaper coverage in contributing to social cohesion, are attempted through a discussion of the newspapers’ inclusion of those sources.

**Hypotheses**

I began my research with a number of expectations. First, I assumed that some groups would be seen in the newspaper making claims that same-sex marriage was consistent with Canadian values of equality and diversity, whereas other groups would be viewed making claims that same-sex marriage was a threat to Canadian values. I thought that one claim might dominate in terms of number of references over time or in specific newspapers. Specifically, I thought that the pro-same-sex-marriage claim would come to dominate in coverage, especially during the 2004 federal election. As I shall demonstrate, this may be broadly true but the coverage was much more nuanced, with more than two views on the issue being represented.

I also thought that some claims might be relegated to the editorial pages, while others would appear as quotes in news stories. In this way, I saw the role of the newspaper as both a site for conflict and a forum where certain views would come to be more dominant. This hypothesis was supported by my findings.

I thought that smaller newspapers or Western newspapers might more often portray same-sex marriage as a threat to Canadian values. In fact, there was a more distinct divide between larger and smaller newspapers.

Finally, I thought that Canadians for Equal Marriage, a lobby group for same-sex marriage that I had volunteered with, had played the strongest role in promoting the view that same-sex marriage was consistent with Canadian values and that government officials also had a strong voice in supporting this view. In fact, Canadians for Equal Marriage did not appear as a source at all in my sample. Government officials did appear.

Essentially, I expected to find newspapers acting mainly as sites for broad discussion among groups with disparate views, with claims that same-sex marriage was consistent with Canadian values coming to eventually dominate, especially in Eastern newspapers. This hypothesis was partially supported in my findings.
Findings

Introduction to the coverage of same-sex marriage

An initial survey of my findings indicated that there was coverage of same-sex marriage in association with Canadian values for the duration of my analysis period. Coverage in Canadian newspapers peaked once in December 2003 and again in June 2004 (see Figure 1). The first peak in Canadian coverage coincided with international coverage Canada received as a result of two key policy events: the Ontario Court of Appeal decision on same-sex marriage and efforts to decriminalize marijuana. In September 2003, The Economist published a front-page article on Canada entitled “Canada’s New Spirit—A Political Transition And New Policy Challenges,” which praised Canada’s social liberalism. “A cautious case can be made that Canada is now rather cool,” it proclaimed (“Canada’s New Spirit,” 2003). Canadian newspapers published articles in September referencing The Economist’s article. The New York Times then followed suit with a front-page article in early December that was republished by the International Herald-Tribune. The article argued that “a chasm has opened up on social issues that go to the heart of fundamental values” (Krauss, 2003). Comparing American and Canadian reactions to the same-sex marriage issue, this chasm, the article held, was a result of differences between American and Canadian values. A number of Canadian newspapers published stories in December referencing the New York Times article. The second peak was a result of discussions of same-sex marriage and Canadian values in Canadian newspapers during the 2004 election campaign.

The articles published around the time of the first peak were somewhat different in nature from the articles published around the 2004 election. The first set of articles often referred to same-sex marriage as one of a number of socially liberal values and policies that were being portrayed as distinctively Canadian. These values and policies tended to also include multiculturalism and the legalization of marijuana. The articles published during the election tended to focus more specifically on same-sex marriage and its own particular association with Canadian values. Figure 2 illustrates the two types of coverage over time.

Figure 1: Articles referencing same-sex marriage and Canadian values
Some of the associations made between same-sex marriage and Canadian values were ambiguous in the sense that they did not take a clear position on whether same-sex marriage was a threat or a confirmation of Canadian values. Although those ambiguous references have been included in the numbers used in Figures 1 and 2, Figure 3, which demonstrates references over time to same-sex marriage as either consistent with or a threat to Canadian values, excludes those more ambiguous references. I observe that initially, in September 2003, the number of articles placing same-sex marriage as a threat to Canadian values was greater than the number that saw Canadian values as consistent with same-sex marriage. I also observe that, in June 2004, more articles posed same-sex marriage as being consistent with Canadian values. However, the number of articles in either case is not very large.
Coverage addressing these issues tended to occur in larger newspapers, most notably *The Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star*. As I have noted, when we look at the articles that make clearly positive or clearly negative associations between same-sex marriage and Canadian values, our sample size is somewhat reduced. We can see, however, that the *Toronto Star* and *The Globe and Mail* published both viewpoints, whereas some other newspapers published only one or the other (see Figure 4). When we look at this coverage over time, we can see that *The Globe and Mail* published both sides of the issue during the period of the 2004 federal election, and that the *Toronto Star* initially portrayed same-sex marriage as a threat to Canadian values but thereafter focused only on Canadian values as being consistent with same-sex marriage. However, in either case, there are very few unambiguous articles.

Finally, Canadian newspaper coverage of these issues tended to be placed as news and commentary (see Figure 5). Fifty-four percent of articles appeared in editorial or opinion pages, or in columns. Thirty-two percent appeared in news, and an additional 5% appeared in sections dedicated to special election coverage. The remaining 9% appeared in religion, business, or other special sections. I discuss this in more detail below.

The roles played by newspapers

Now that we have a basic overview of the coverage of the same-sex marriage/Canadian values issue, I will move on to discuss the roles that the newspapers played throughout the coverage period in mediating the discussion over Canadian values. Here, I ask which democratic roles, outlined by Baker and discussed above, did newspapers most play in their coverage of the same-sex marriage/Canadian values issue? Did they highlight or mediate conflicting views, promote debate, or foster particular common conceptions of the Canadian identity and Canadian values? Were some roles emphasized more than others by specific newspapers?

I will approach these questions through an analysis of the viewpoints portrayed overall and in specific newspapers, the type and placement of coverage within newspapers, and the types of sources used in newspapers. Each of these factors can provide
insight into the specific role being played by newspapers: whether the newspaper is seen primarily to have a role in facilitating groups’ struggles over identities and values, alerting them as to the issues at stake, and informing as to the positions being taken (as it would be according to a liberal-plural view of the roles of newspapers in democracy); or whether newspapers’ role as a forum for debate was primary (as it would be in a republican view). For example, if a variety of conflicting viewpoints are portrayed in the same newspaper, a republican model is indicated. Again, if coverage takes place primarily in the opinion format and if opposing views are portrayed, a republican model is indicated. However, if coverage always takes the form of “objective” news, or if one message about values is clearly dominant, it might indicate a liberal-plural approach to understanding the newspaper’s role primarily as disseminating information to groups whose interests are already formed (see Baker, 2002).

It is important to note that the analysis provided in this section is only intended to be illustrative. It can in no way be used to make overall conclusions about the roles that specific newspapers, or newspapers in general, play. A more extensive analysis, not only of the broader same-sex marriage issue, but also of coverage of other issues, would be necessary to draw conclusions about the overall roles of particular newspapers in fostering social cohesion. Nevertheless, the limited analysis undertaken here is useful as an exploration of how a larger analysis might be undertaken, and it illustrates the types of social cohesion that can be emphasized by editorial decisions undertaken by specific newspapers.

Viewpoints included
We have already seen (Figure 4) that only the Toronto Star and The Globe and Mail included both positive and negative associations between same-sex marriage and Canadian values during the sample period. Upon a more detailed analysis (see Figure 6) we see that the National Post, Le Soleil, Ottawa Citizen, and Edmonton Journal also included opposing viewpoints; they included positive or negative associations between same-sex marriage and Canadian values as well as viewpoints that questioned any uniform portrayal of Canadian values. These newspapers, then, might be seen as acting on a republican conceptualization of the role of the media in democracy—as acting as
a forum for conflict where opposing views are represented. Here, these newspapers can be seen as offering a forum for the discussion of multiple views from which, ideally, a common conception of same-sex marriage and the Canadian identity might arise. A number of other newspapers included only positive or only negative associations between same-sex marriage and Canadian values. These included the Vancouver Sun, Hamilton Spectator, Guelph Mercury, and Calgary Sun. Because they included a uniform view on same-sex marriage and Canadian values, they might be seen as promoting or drawing upon an assumption of already-existing shared values in their readership. This would be consistent with a liberal-plural conceptualization of the role of the media in democracy, where different newspapers should cater to particular points of view, alerting and informing publics when their interests are at stake. Since these particular Canadian newspapers are not explicitly partisan papers, but generally cater to broader local audiences, such newspapers might be seen as catering to the particular point of view held by their readership, or to the majority group in their area, viewed as having relatively cohesive pre-existing views.

In The Globe and Mail, conflicting views were represented in close proximity in the month of June, suggesting a debate within the pages of the paper. In the Toronto Star, however, opposing viewpoints did not appear in close proximity. After two items in September 2003 that portrayed same-sex marriage as a threat to Canadian values (Cadman, 2003; MacCharles, 2003), coverage in the Toronto Star represented same-sex marriage as being consistent with Canadian values. We might see the Toronto Star, then, as either leading at different times in different directions, or as catering to shifting senses of its readership or to shifting contributors’ views, rather than as fostering republican-style debate.

**Type of coverage**

Since opinion coverage is often used to promote particular, and often conflicting, viewpoints, we might see this type of coverage as fostering republican-style debate. News-
format coverage, on the other hand, which often uses one dominant frame, often in conjunction with an objective stance, might be seen as alerting groups as to events and information affecting their interests, assumed to be pre-existing, rather than fostering debate toward a formulation of a new conceptualization of the common good or a common conceptualization of Canadian interests and values. An analysis of the type of coverage received in The Globe and Mail and the Toronto Star (see Figures 7 and 8) illustrates that while The Globe and Mail coverage of same-sex marriage and Canadian values was concentrated (70%) in opinion-format areas of the newspaper, coverage in the Toronto Star was concentrated in the news-format areas of the newspaper (60%). In this case, The Globe and Mail might be seen as taking a republican approach (the same approach The Globe and Mail was seen taking in light of the conflicting viewpoints represented in the paper—see previous section), while the Toronto Star might be seen as assuming pre-existing sets of interests, rather than fostering debate. This is similar to what was just indicated by our examination of the Toronto Star (see previous section).

Overall, articles portraying same-sex marriage as consistent with Canadian values were concentrated in the news sections of the newspaper while articles portraying same-sex marriage as a threat to Canadian values appeared primarily in opinion format. Articles that questioned any uniform portrayal of Canadian values also appeared in opinion format (see Figure 9). We might interpret this as evidence that articles portraying Canadian values as consistent with same-sex marriage were seen as more objective or as part of an objective account, whereas articles portraying same-sex marriage as a threat to Canadian values were seen as “just opinion”—not an objective account, but an account posed for evaluation among a variety of opinions.

**Types of sources and the roles played by Canadian voices**

I have posed the research question “Which voices were seen participating in the discussions of same-sex marriage and Canadian values in Canadian newspapers?” My analysis reveals that many voices—from those of government officials to those of individual Canadians—found a place in the pages of Canadian newspapers. Claims about same-sex marriage and its relationship to Canadian values came not only from the government, but also from a wide variety of voices. Sources who
saw support for same-sex marriage as a Canadian value were diverse (see Figure 10). They included government officials such as Prime Minister Paul Martin; religious officials, including Vancouver-area Bishop Michael Ingham and Lois Wilson (the first woman moderator of the United Church of Canada, the first Canadian president of the World Council of Churches, and a Canadian senator); journalists; and individual citizens, including lesbian couple Mary-Woo Sims and Patricia Dewhirst. (Sims is also a former chief human rights commissioner for B.C.)

Sources who presented same-sex marriage as a threat to Canadian values included representatives of religious organizations, including Charles McVety, president of Canada Christian College; Pastor Willy Reimer of the Sunwest Christian Fellowship; and Bishop Fred Henry; politicians of various stripes, including Liberal MP Chuck Cadman and Canadian Alliance Deputy Justice Critic Jan Brown; as well as writers, media personalities, and journalists, including writer and activist Gerald Vandezande and Christian broadcaster Lorna Dueck (see Figure 10). A number of these sources criticized cer-
tain portrayals of Canadian values, often pointing out that Canadians’ values were more diverse than was recognized by some commentators. These criticisms were often directed at statements made about Canadian values by the Liberal party during the election campaign. Journalists John Robson, L. Ian MacDonald, Rick Anderson, Jason Markusoff, and George Jonas as well as expert commentator Lorne Sossin all voiced their opposition to certain claims about Canadian values (see Figure 10). That is not to say that all voices had access to representation in the newspapers. Although my methodology does not support an analysis of the access available to commentators, it can be observed that, in general, oppositional and alternative views were not excluded in the debates surrounding same-sex marriage and Canadian values (see Schlesinger, 1989).

What does the diversity of voices in Canadian newspapers say about newspapers’ roles in processing conflicting claims and fostering common interests to create social cohesion? Overall, 10% of the voices making claims about same-sex marriage and Canadian values belonged to general members of the public (see Figure 10). Thirty-two percent of the voices making claims about Canadian values were those of government officials, and another 32% were journalists themselves. Twenty-six percent of the voices belong to other authorities who either contributed their writing to the newspaper or who were cited in an article. The picture that emerges is a debate within newspapers that takes place between authorities, government officials, and journalists, with members of the general public playing only a small role. We see authorities and institutions leading in the conflicts over and construction of Canadian identity. Broken down (see Figure 11), we can see that journalists, authorities, and the government all led in framing same-sex marriage as being consistent with Canadian values, while journalists were notably absent from directly posing same-sex marriage as a threat to Canadian values; rather, those journalists who did not pose same-sex marriage as being consistent with Canadian values questioned any uniform portrayal of Canadian values at all, or raised the issue in a neutral fashion (see Figure 10).

Journalists, then, might be said to have taken a role in attempting to put forward a common or dominant conceptualization of Canadian values that was not threatened by same-sex marriage but, rather, that was accommodative of and/or consistent with the acceptance of same-sex marriage.

Conclusion

The analysis put forward in this article both highlights and makes a close examination of the role of Canadian newspapers in constructing and debating Canadian values. It does so in order to think through newspapers’ roles in the construction of national values and to highlight Canadian newspapers’ possible roles in fostering social cohesion, both by creating forums for debate and the expression of particular interests, and by constructing and leading in the formulation of what appear in newspapers as dom-
inant national values. It concludes that, during the 2003-2004 debates over same-sex marriage and Canadian values, newspapers operated according to a variety of models. At times they operated in a way that was consistent with a liberal-plural model of newspapers' role in democracy, where newspapers are seen as promoting or catering to certain pre-existing shared values among groups. At other times they operated in a way that was consistent with a republican model, where newspapers are seen as a forum for bringing conflicting views to a common conclusion. At the same time, the voices portrayed in these debates were largely those of journalists, government figures, and authority sources, thus falling short of a republican ideal. Some journalists, as well as other sources—and thus newspapers more generally—might in some ways be seen as having actively led the construction of a common or dominant conceptualization of Canadian values that was not threatened by same-sex marriage. By June of 2004, the view that acceptance of same-sex marriage went along with Canadian values of tolerance and accommodation had become dominant in Canadian newspaper coverage of the issue.

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