“The Second American Revolution”: Expressions of Canadian Identity in News Coverage at the Outbreak of the United States Civil War

Brian Gabrial
Concordia University

Abstract: Just as the Civil War splintered the United States, it also set into motion events putting Canada on the road to confederation. This research examines news coverage during April and May of 1861 in two influential English-language Canadian newspapers—Toronto’s The Globe and Montréal’s The Gazette—of U.S. events that The Globe often headlined “The American Revolution.” In that coverage, five important themes expressing Canadian identity emerge that include Canada’s British identity, antipathy toward Americanism and American democracy, fear of American militarism, sympathy for Americans, and Canadian liberal and conservative political threads.

Keywords: Journalism studies; Communication; Media studies; Mass communication; Journalism history

Introduction

Four months before the firing on Fort Sumter, South Carolina—the event that triggered the U.S. Civil War—an editorial in Toronto’s The Globe accurately
assessed the sad state of U.S. affairs: “Looking southward, we see no streak of blue sky; all is gloomy, dark, threatening.” George Brown, the newspaper’s editor, then sadly predicted that “A fierce civil war, unlike anything ever experienced on this continent, seems inevitable” (Jan 14, 1861, p. 2). Brown was not alone, as editors on both sides of the border waited anxiously for what the coming months would bring to the United States. The U.S. troubles also created an uncertain time for Canadian editors, whose concerns became increasingly focused on Canada’s future relations with the United States and Great Britain. When the Civil War commenced in April of 1861, Canada was British North America, and by war’s end, it was heading toward confederation. Thus, at this critical juncture in North American history, Canadian newspapers were not only informing readers of U.S. events, but also giving best-guess assessments of Canada’s destiny. Embedded in that news coverage were important expressions of Canadian identity.

In his book *The Imaginary Canadian* (1980), Tony Wilden noted that powerful threads of pro- and anti-Americanism have co-existed in the Canadian mind, posing a duality of thought that has positioned Americans in both negative and positive lights, where Americans become the “Other” that Canadians admire and disdain, emulate or reject. Given that nineteenth-century Canadian attitudes toward Americans had “considerable value” in shaping the “course of Canadian-American relations” (Wise & Brown, 1967, p. vi), this study of content about U.S. events found in two 19th-century Canadian newspapers, *The Globe* in Toronto and *The Gazette* in Montréal, reveals important expressions of Canadian identity that are signified in five important themes: the importance of British identity, an antipathy toward “Americanism” and suspicion of American democracy, a well-grounded fear of American militarism, a patronizing sympathy for Americans in crisis, and liberal and conservative political threads. These significant themes emerged in news content at a moment when one nation splintered and another began to unite.

**Newspapers and Social Knowledge**

In a discussion of Canadian newspaper coverage, it is crucial to understand the part newspapers can play in a society. First, newspapers distribute social knowledge, which is critical for any society and its members (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), and second, they inform individuals about who and what they are (Schudson, 1991). Further, as Michael Schudson (2003) has noted, journalists not only report events, but also reflect certain realities about communities and their social norms. News reports can become, as James Carey (1989) observed, “arenas of dramatic forces and action” (p. 21). More so, newspapers help promote a sense of national identity by standardizing, in historian David Paul Nord’s words, “a political language of a state” (1991, p. 395). While Nord’s and Schudson’s observations regard American newspapers, their comments also resonate with Canadian newspapers—especially nineteenth-century Canadian newspapers, which conveyed mass information across a vast land. Previous scholarship examining Canadian newspapers and their role in shaping a national identity has focused largely on the powerful voices of important editors such as George Brown. J. M. S. Careless’ two-volume work Brown of *The Globe* (1963, 1989) is one example. André Lebevbre’s *La Montreal Gazette et le nationalisme canadien*,

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1835-1842 (1970) is useful, too. However, little research has approached Canadian press history relative to how specific newspaper content, including news items and editorials, reflected the cultural, social, and political attitudes of their time.

The research for this paper examined newspaper coverage of the United States during April and May of 1861 in two major English-speaking Canadian newspapers: Montréal’s The Gazette in “Canada East” and Toronto’s The Globe in “Canada West.” Then as now, Montréal and Toronto were vital North American cities, and the editorial content in their newspapers reached, as it does now, a significant readership. By 1861, The Globe had a circulation of roughly 30,000 subscribers, already English-speaking Canada’s most influential newspaper (Winks, 1971). Considered the chief promoter of the “Northern position,” the newspaper, led by editor George Brown, worked to mitigate pro-Southern feelings in Canada (Careless, 1963). Situated in more conservative Canada East and in Canada’s then largest city, Montréal’s The Gazette was a major English-speaking Canadian newspaper that reflected a more conservative and pro-Southern view. Its editors, John Lowe and Browne Chamberlin, held anti-slavery views and leaned toward the Southern cause, believing that the North’s increasing economic and political clout had oppressed the Southern economy (MacDonald, 1974; Winks, 1971). To them, the South’s right to secede was no different than the American colonies’ right to declare independence from Great Britain in 1776 (Careless, 1963).

This paper’s primary analysis, which regards the text as a “field of meaning in which intentions and possible effects interact” (Larsen, 1991, p. 122), was concerned with editorials and news items found in the two newspapers and determined tone or bias in all news content that referred to the United States. Specifically, the analysis identified items addressing 1) the impending U.S. Civil War, 2) U.S. slavery, 3) Northern and Southern culture and leadership, 4) the April 12 shelling of Fort Sumter by Confederate troops, 5) stated British (or European) positions on the war, and 6) Queen Victoria’s Proclamation of Neutrality on May 15. A secondary analysis of the identified text addressed the guiding research question: How did newspaper content express the five prominent themes about Canadian identity (i.e., identification as British, antipathy for Americanism and suspicion of American democracy, fear of American militarism, patronizing sympathy for Americans in crisis, displays of liberal and conservative thought)?

The initial findings showed that, from April 1 to May 31, 1861, The Gazette published items regarding the United States in 48 days of news coverage, and The Globe published items in 55 days of coverage. In general, The Globe’s news coverage of U.S. events was more extensive. In the 12 days before the firing on Fort Sumter, The Globe consistently headlined news items about impending or actual hostilities as “The American Revolution,” while The Gazette routinely published such items under the headlines “Our Special American Dispatches” or “War News.” Both newspapers informed subscribers of their intentions to provide extensive reports. On May 1, Gazette editors Lowe and Chamberlin said that the newspaper would “contain the fullest particulars of the WAR NEWS from the United States. . .” (p.1).
*The Gazette* also published dispatches from its “Special Correspondent” in New York and “Letters from the Seat of War,” attributed to a “Montrealer in the Federal Army” (p.1). An editor’s note to readers in the May 3 *Globe* said that the newspaper would bring the latest telegraphic dispatches to readers during “the continuance of the American War”: “The expense of this unusual service will be considerable; but it will place this journal in the supply of news, far in advance of the American Press and also all Canadian papers with one single exception” (“Note to Readers,” p. 2).

In early April, the majority of general news items reported on troop movements and other preparations for war, indicating heightened tensions between Federal and Confederate forces in Charleston Harbor. The *Gazette’s* headlines on April 10 and 12 referred to the “Impending Conflict in the United States” and “Impending Civil War in the United States” respectively (p. 2; p.5). An April 12 *Globe* item reported “[a]nother day of intense suspense, and hostilities yet remain uncommenced in the United States” (“The American Revolution,” p. 2). As to the first reports about the firing on Fort Sumter, they appeared in the Saturday editions of *The Globe* and *The Gazette* on April 13, 1861. *The Gazette’s* report was headlined “The American Civil War Begun,” while *The Globe* informed subscribers of “War Commenced.” *The Globe* also headlined some items as “The Civil War” (p. 2). After the firing on Fort Sumter, *The Gazette* and *The Globe* published daily items about events in South Carolina and the United States. In May, when it became clear that the U.S. situation would not resolve soon, U.S. news coverage intensified in both newspapers. In May, such daily dispatches were usually found on page two under the column banners “By Telegraph” and “American Revolution” in *The Globe* and “Our American Despatches” and “General Press Despatches” in *The Gazette*.

In May, both newspapers published items focusing on Virginia’s secession, the effect of a Northern blockade of Southern ports, and the Confederacy’s possible recognition by Great Britain and other European powers. A May 9 *Gazette* item, for example, headlined “Diplomatic Correspondence on the U. States Affairs,” noted that there would be no “haste to recognize the Southern Confederacy, but it must be recognized when a government de facto is established” (p. 2). On May 15, *The Globe* reported Lord John Russell’s assurances that naval forces had been sent to protect its British shipping. Three days later, *The Gazette* printed Russell’s comments asserting that Great Britain viewed a Union invasion of the South as an “absurdity” and a Union blockade of Southern ports as “the severest offence” (“Lord John Russell on the Letters of Marque,” p. 2). Other items addressed or denied rumours that Canada was shipping arms to the United States. For example, an April 20 *Gazette* editorial called a story reporting that “600 Canadians from Quebec and Montréal are going to march under the Northern standard” “a ridiculous canard” (“The Civil War—The First Blood Spilt”, p. 2). Other items in May stressed Canada’s neutrality; however, one May 10 *Globe* article reported that 15,000 men were ready to cross the border to help New York’s lumber industry. Both newspapers published the full text of Queen Victoria’s May 15 Proclamation of Neutrality—*The Globe* on May 28 and *The Gazette* on May 30th.
Expressions of Canadian identity: Identification as British

Canadian editorials and newspaper items indicated strong allegiances to Great Britain and defined Canadian identity as British. Certainly before Confederation, much of what Canada did politically, diplomatically, and militarily, including interactions with the United States, depended upon Great Britain. As such, U.S., British, and Canadian official relations were enmeshed. Despite the severe strains and even war in the early part of the nineteenth century, U.S. and British relations had, by 1861, reached a level of stability, even amity (Winks, 1971). However, as the U.S. secession crisis boiled over, old animosities and lingering suspicions between the two nations, especially pertaining to British neutrality and Canadian sovereignty, re-surfaced (Careless, 1963; Winks, 1971). Of more pressing concern, nervous British Canadians worried with credible reason that the Northern states would send their military northward if the South seceded.

In matters of Canadian foreign affairs, news content focused on Great Britain’s reaction to the American crisis, giving only hints of separate Canadian concerns. For example, as Great Britain considered recognizing the Confederate States and the Confederate States Army’s right to trade on the open seas, several news accounts in the two newspapers noted the tense relations developing between the United States and Great Britain, while also commenting on their difficult past. For example, an editorial in the April 20 Globe said that the two nations “have not enjoyed a good relationship,” adding caustically, “America would take advantage of the weakness of our Mother country” if Great Britain faced a similar national crisis (p. 2). Further, this editorial warned that England would not tolerate U.S. interference with Canadian shipping and might even support the South if such transgressions occurred. A Globe editorial on May 27, headlined “British Interference,” first defended England against an angry Northern American press by asserting, “No matter what course Great Britain may take her actions are sure to be misconstrued and her people libeled,” (p. 2). Likewise, an editorial in the May 25 Gazette criticized members of the Northern U.S. press, upset that the British did not take a stronger stand against Southern privateers, reminding them that the United Stated never supported England “in time” of “peril or disaster” when “the ties of kindred. . . should have bound them to her side. . . .” Further, this editorial noted “how often Britain’s hour of trouble was seized upon as an opportune to bully, thwart and vex her, and to exert unfair concessions from her” (p. 2).

One May editorial proved exceptionally clear in illustrating just how closely tied English Canadians felt to Great Britain. In the May 13 Globe editorial, Brown re-affirmed the recurrent theme of British identity. Headlined “The Queen’s Birthday,” the editorial addressed the upcoming May 24 celebrations for Queen Victoria’s birthday, noting, “We are proud in that we are subjects of Queen Victoria.” Brown continued, “In the past, in the present, there neither was nor is there any nation equal to the British empire. In its glories, in its greatness, in its power, we Canadians share.” Brown then proudly asserted, “We inherit its traditions; we cling to its customs. . . .” (p. 2). Similarly, on the Queen’s birthday, the Montréal newspaper re-affirmed Canada’s strong British connections: “Let us rejoice that she [Victoria] still lives to reign over us, to bless her subjects with a wise and benignant way” (p. 2, brackets added).
Expressions of Canadian identity: Antipathy toward “Americanism” and suspicion of American democracy

In the May 27 “British Interference” Globe editorial noted above, a remark with surprisingly contemporary resonance among Canadians sharply criticizes the neighbours to the south: “The Americans imagine themselves such an ‘almighty great nation,’ that when a government meets their wishes, they attribute it to fear of their wrath; they imagine in their presence the knees of the mightiest must knock together from very terror.” The writer observed, “Americans are not a people bound by any authority whatever right or wrong, if it should not be in accordance with their interests or prejudices” (p. 2). Such words express Canadian identity by constructing Americans as “the Other” and signalling Canadian antipathy toward “Americanism.”

Similarly, a May 21 Globe editorial, headlined “British Sympathy for the United States,” said that despite the righteousness of the Union cause, Americans were “restive” when it came to criticism. The editorial asserted grudgingly that British Canadians should support Americans “not because they have any particular affection for the American,” noting that the U.S. would not “extend aid of any sort to them if they were in trouble” (p.2).

The sharp tone of The Globe’s editor is evident in a brief editorial remark following the arrival of the news that Queen Victoria had declared British neutrality: It was “more than they deserve,” the editor snapped (p. 2). As concern grew over a possible U.S. war with Great Britain, an editorial in the May 30 Globe, assessing the situation perhaps more realistically, said, “Whether long or short, great and powerful as our cousins imagine themselves, they will scarcely undertake to wage a civil and foreign war at one and the same time” (p. 2).

In the May 13 Globe editorial commemorating Queen Victoria’s birthday, George Brown compared Canadians with Americans in the North, saying, “While we admire the devotedness to the Union of the people of the Northern United States, we are glad we are not them; we are glad that we do not belong to a country torn by intestine divisions” (p. 2). Further contrasting the two peoples, Brown observed, “We are not a demonstrative people. There is little ‘spread-eagleism’ in our composition.” Brown’s aversion to “spread-eagleism” was indicative of the antipathy that many Canadians had toward “Americanism” in general. The Gazette’s “Special” New York correspondent, for example, reported that everybody in the city was waving the “Stars and Stripes” (p. 1).

As April of 1861 came to an end, Brown wrote an editorial, headlined “Not Without Its Drawbacks,” that expressed the general British-Canadian suspicion of American democracy. The editorial, while supportive of Abraham Lincoln, remarked, “One of the results of the republican form of government is to develop [sic] to a greater extent than under any other system, the individuality of the people composing the nation.” The editorial continues, “Americans believe they can be president but the problem is they are taking actions and criticizing their leader without much regard.” To Brown, there was no “surer or shorter way to anarchy” (The Globe, April 30, 1861, p. 2). Likewise, a May 3 Gazette editorial remark noted that it “is an absolute truth, that the more you put power in the hands of the uneducated masses, the more you increase the influence of the dem-
agogue, and lessen the conservative influence of wealth and intelligence” (The Gazette, 1861, p. 2). The Gazette editorial followed the observations of the London Times reporter W. H. Russell, who called the U.S. “The Great Republic,” adding, “We are accustomed to think the Americans a very excitable people” (p.2). A May 7 London Times item appearing in the May 25 Gazette said, “The Americans are habituated to self-government, but that only renders them less amenable to control. . .” (p. 2). Similarly, a May 8 Globe editorial critically compared the U.S. system of government with the favoured British version: “If the Congress of the United States were as powerful in the nation as Parliament is in Great Britain, the presence of a number of traitors [Southerners] would be a serious [but not fatal] inconvenience” (p. 2; brackets added). Such judgments would be asserted again by Canadian historian William Norris, who 10 years after the Civil War cited “the political institutions of the United States” as a major source of “wide-spread” immorality in that country (Norris quoted in Wilden, 1980, p. 121). While Canadians might applaud many American ideals, they would ultimately choose “peace, order, and good government” over the American ideals of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness (Morton, 1964, p. 111).

Expressions of Canadian identity: Fears of U.S. militarism
As the Northern military build-up for war intensified, a third major Canadian theme—fear of American militarism—appeared in items and editorials in both newspapers. Much of the news content expressing this theme concerned the increasingly tense relationship between the United States and Great Britain. However, other content pointed to Canadians’ historic fear of the United States pushing northward. As evidence, powerful Northern newspaper editors, such as the influential James Gordon Bennett of the New York Herald, suggested that Canada become the consolation prize if the South actually seceded (Careless, 1963). Other prominent editors hinted that Canada should become part of the U.S. if the North—in Horace Greeley’s words—let its “erring sisters go in peace” (Winks, 1971, p. 28).

Southerners held equally suspicious and possibly even more hostile views of Canada. Beginning with England’s 1833 prohibition on slavery in its colonial possessions, Southern slavery advocates—over the course of nearly three decades—came to view Canada as an illegal harbour for escaped slaves and abolitionists. Certainly, for many U.S. slaves, Canada West was the Promised Land, the elusive terminal point on the Underground Railroad, and by 1861, Canada West had absorbed some 11,000 runaway slaves (MacDonald, 1974; Winks, 1971).

A March 12 London Times article in the April 1 Globe warned that Canada might prove the most expedient route by which to conduct U.S. trade with Great Britain because of its “facilities of communication by lake, river, and railway,” even through “amalgamation with our own colonies” (p. 2; italics added). A New York World item in the April 4 Globe, headlined “Canada from an American View,” (p.2) suggested a possible Canadian union with the Northern states, arguing that ties between the “British Provinces” and the Union “are continually strengthening. We rejoice at their prosperity, because it depends measurably upon the same causes as our own, follows the same courses, and must end in an identity of interests.” The writer added, “In the course of time the United States will
embrace all the habitable regions north of the St. Lawrence if not under the present federation, by such other relations of union or intimate alliance as will be moulded by increased experience and mutual interest” (p. 2).

As many Canadians also understood, Great Britain was losing imperial interest in maintaining its expansive North American possession, leaving Canada vulnerable to the Americans. While Canada had recently settled an “annexation” question with the U.S., Canadians did not believe Americans would respect their northern border (Cuff & Granatstein, 1977; Mahant & Mount, 1984; Francis, Jones & Smith, 1992). However, renewed “annexation” talk from the U.S. provided a compelling rationale to begin Confederation talks in 1864 (Martin, 1955; Martin, 1995). Further, a justification for a military campaign into Canada existed because some Northerners rightly feared Canada would become a prime location for Southern spies to hatch anti-Union plots (as it did). As Canadian historian Donald Creighton (1976) observed, regardless of the Civil War’s outcome, Canada was potentially in peril: “If the North won the war, it might, flushed with victory, turn upon British America and exact a terrible revenge. If it lost the war, it might ‘seek on the St. Lawrence an indemnity for what it lost on the Potomac’” (p. 83).

In a May 9 Gazette letter to the editor, headlined “Are We Prepared for War?” a writer calling himself “Ramrod” opined, “In these stirring times one is inclined to look home, and see if the tocain [sic] of war should be sounded that we are in a position to at once repel the invader from our coasts” (p. 2). While not specifically naming the United States, “Ramrod’s” point is clear that Canada must protect itself.

In the years leading up to the Civil War, Canadian criticism of U.S. fugitive-slave laws, especially the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, rankled Southern Americans (Winks, 1971). Virginia Governor Henry Wise once asked President James Buchanan to demand from Britain the return of American slaves from Canada (Winks, 1971). By 1859, already angry at Canada for harbouring runaway slaves, Southerners became positively apoplectic when they learned that John Brown plotted his disastrous Harpers Ferry raid at Chatham, Canada West (MacDonald, 1974). Wise told Virginia lawmakers, “A provisional government was attempted in a British Province, by our countrymen. . . combined with Canadians to invade the slave-holding states. . . for the purpose of stirring up universal insurrection of slaves throughout the whole South” (MacDonald, 1974, p. 76). The governor hinted that a “war on abolitionists would be carried into the negro-welcoming provinces” (Winks, 1971, p. 13).

Once the Civil War started, the South hardly wanted to antagonize Great Britain, a nation it desperately needed for survival. Even so, a strange reference to American designs on Canada, in a quote from the New Orleans True Delta reprinted in the May 13 Gazette, indicated Southern resentment toward Canada. The quote found under the item, headlined “A Fire Eaters [sic] Opinion of Canada,” both insulted Canadians and warned them of Northern aggression. The writer averred, “Better, a thousand times better, to come under the domination of free negroes [sic] or gipseys [sic], than of Yankees, low Germans or Canadians. Gipseys [sic] and free negroes [sic] have many redeemable and noble and generous traits; Yankees, sour-kraut Germans and Canadians none” (p. 2). As a portent
to Canadians, the writer then claimed Union leaders had said, “[T]he North will absorb Canada,” adding, “the vile, sensual, animal, brutal, infidel, superstitious democracy of Canada, and the Yankees will coalesce.”

**Expressions of Canadian identity: Patronizing sympathy for Americans in crisis**

Canadian sympathy for the United States following the firing on Fort Sumter manifested in several editorials expressing concern over a civil war’s terrible toll, but such sympathy declined markedly as tensions between the United States and Great Britain increased. One editorial in the April 13 *Globe* said, “We are loth [sic] to believe that the contest will last long. We fully expect that the fratricidal content will cease when its direful effects are thoroughly realized” (p. 2). Likewise, an editorial in the April 15 *Gazette* noted that the “calamity of civil war had really fallen upon the United States,” further cautioning, “Unless checked at once, this war—if war it may be termed will be the most rapid in its movements, and most bitter while it lasts, of any on record without a doubt” (p. 2). As it became clear that hostilities would not soon end, another *Gazette* article, this time on April 22, said, “We cannot be indifferent spectators of the impending conflict. . . . As simple spectators, we cannot see one particle of good which can result from a fratricidal war” (p. 2).

It is also important to note that Canadian goodwill dissipated once Canadians realized the North was fighting to save the Union and not to free slaves (Smith, 1973). This prompted many Northern U.S. politicians to become increasingly anti-British and anti-Canadian (Careless, 1963; Morton, 1964; Winks, 1971). Ironically, this disenchantment with the Union over the Civil War’s goals had stronger effects in conservative Canada East, causing many editors to sympathize with the South despite general disdain for slavery (MacDonald, 1974).

**Expressions of Canadian identity: Displays of liberal and conservative thought**

Within the newspaper coverage, expressions of Canadian liberal and conservative thought emerged. The analysis showed that these expressions manifested in newspaper items indicating sympathy or support for the North or the South, including their leadership. While both liberal and conservative Canadian newspaper editors abhorred the institution of slavery, they understood the Civil War’s causes as different and developed opinions about the war that, according to Wise (1967), “shifted radically at different stages of the war” (p. 82). For example, a month following South Carolina’s secession, a *Gazette* editorial said of the North and the South that the “inhabitants of the two sections of the Union form two separate and distinct nations” (December 24, 1860, p. 2). Yet, on April 15, three days after the firing on Fort Sumter, a *Gazette* editorial noted about the South’s peculiar institution, “The death blow to slavery on this continent was struck at Charleston, South Carolina. . . by its most devoted advocates and friends [slave owners] (p. 2, brackets added). In a May 13 *Gazette* item, titled “A Voice from the South,” a Canadian in Alabama wrote, “Don’t understand me to be an advocate for slavery, but the North has no right to force such restrictions upon the South as she has done.” The writer argued, “Believe me this secession has been the work of the people,—[sic] not party leaders” (p. 2).
Brown, the staunch abolitionist and liberal, believed the U.S. struggle would finally rid North America of slavery. In January of 1861, believing erroneously that the Civil War had begun, Brown wrote, “The first shot has been fired in the second American Revolution! How strangely it sounds. How different the motive” (“The Progress of the Revolution,” The Globe, January 12, 1861, p. 2). Brown reasoned that in 1776, it “was to secure freedom to vindicate and uphold the rights of man.” He argued that now it was “to secure the institution of slavery, to render it impossible that four millions of men should receive their rights”:

The first had reason and justice and the sympathies of free men everywhere even in the country whose authority was about to be throw off—on its side, and it succeeded; the second has neither reason, nor justice, nor humanity, nor the sympathies of the free, nor the prayers of the good in its behalf, and it must fail.” (p. 2)

Brown called the creation of the Confederacy “a disgrace,” and labeled it “a professedly Christian and civilized nation of men-stealers” (“The American Revolution,” The Globe, February 21, 1861, p. 2). In the months leading up to the war, Brown often headlined The Globe’s items about the American secession crisis as the “The American Revolution” or “The Second American Revolution,” believing that a free North would not peacefully co-exist with a slave Confederacy. Brown also believed the Union should act decisively against the seceding states. “If South Carolina is an independent State,” Brown reasoned in one editorial, “Fort Sumpter [sic] should be taken; if it is still in the union, its representatives should still be in Congress” (“The Secession Movement,” January 11, 1861, p. 2). Brown simply could not understand why American leadership (or lack thereof) had put Americans “utterly at sea” while “fiery secessionists” and “extreme abolitionists” tore the country apart (“North and South,” December 20, 1860, p. 2).

It was not surprising that the liberal Globe published news content and editorials that reflected a generally pro-North/-Union view, while the conservative Gazette contained more editorials and news items that appeared more supportive of the South/Confederacy. For example, The Globe consistently expressed a pro-Northern bias as it criticized Southern culture and personality while attacking the horror of slave life. “The North has as noble a cause to fight for as any for which blood has ever been shed,” Brown wrote in an April 8 editorial. “Every motive which impels men to do well and bravely is theirs. If they stand as nobly by their cause as their cause is noble, they cannot fail of success” (p. 2). In attacking Southern culture, an item from the New York Tribune in the April 2 Globe said that a Southern gentleman’s “two most important attributes” were “to own niggers, and do nothing himself.” The writer observed that “[g]entlemen of their class commit the most murders” but are never brought to justice (p. 2). Another article in the April 4 Globe, headlined “South to Be a Monarchy,” came from a “Southern Planter and a Union Man,” who claimed that the Southern Confederacy would abolish a representative form of government. A further item about slavery in the April 5 Globe reported that a “negro [sic] woman” in Missouri had been whipped to death by her master, further noting that the slave owner had to pay a mere $2,500 fine as restitution for her death (“American Revolution,” p. 1).
Other *Globe* items identified Southern intransigence over slavery as the culprit for the dissolution of the United States. On the eve of the firing on Fort Sumter, an editorial warned that disaster awaited the South if the “arrogant and fiery spirit of the Southern planter . . . plunge him into a fratricidal conflict with the Government of the United States” (“War Impending,” April 11, 1861, p. 2). On April 12, the day South Carolina fired on Fort Sumter, a *Globe* editorial observed that the Southern position was based on “rhetorical flourishes,” containing “so much fiction mixed with so little truth . . .” (p. 2).

One May 6 *Globe* item, headlined “A British Subject Maltreated in Mississippi,” said that a “Scotch man from London, Canada” claimed he was beaten because he could not pay a debt. In the postscript, the “Scotch man” said he would head home to Canada with his heart filled “with vengeance . . . against the Southern confederacy” (p. 1). A May 17 *Globe* item, headlined “A Canadian in Virginia,” reported that Virginians were ready for a fight, including some nearby academy students who had come to “take revenge on the hated Canadian, whose land affords asylum for the unfortunate sons and daughters of bondage” (p. 1). Finally, a *Globe* editorial suggested that the North might encourage slave insurrection: “While we regret the necessity for a servile war, we think that the North has manifested too great a delicacy in this matter.” Southerners were simply “traitors of the worst description” who were trying to create a “republic based upon human slavery . . .” (“The Slave Population of the Confederate States,” May 13, 1861, p. 2).

In general, *The Gazette*’s news content indicated a pro-Southern bias. After the firing on Fort Sumter, the April 16 *Gazette* published several items from Southern sources, accompanied by a detailed illustration of Charleston Harbor. One item reported that bells were “ringing a merry peal and the people [were] engaged in every demonstration of joy” after the fort fell (p. 2). An April 17 *Gazette* editorial referred to the firing on Fort Sumter as a “glorious affair, in which such splendid courage and daring were displayed and nobody hurt,” reasoning that Virginia would soon join the Confederacy (p. 2). Regarding the assertion that “nobody” was hurt during the fight at Fort Sumter, an April 18 *Globe* editorial mocked the reporting, saying that it was hoped that “in all future battles, the North and South will be as fortunate . . . that, as now, we should be able hereafter to write—‘Nobody’s hurt’” (p. 2). Similarly, an item in the April 30 *Gazette*, headlined “‘Somebody Hurt’ at Fort Sumter,” reported an account from a “grocer from Charleston who was impressed into the Confederate army, but escaped,” who said that during the shelling of Fort Sumter, 1,000 rebels died (p. 2). On April 20, a *Gazette* report titled “The Civil War—The First Blood Spilt” emphasized, “If the South is thoroughly in earnest it cannot be conquered by the North” (p. 2). That assertion came after the news that a Pennsylvanian volunteer regiment had clashed with pro-South sympathizers in Baltimore. (In contrast, an April 23 *Globe* editorial wrote of the same incident, “We are sorry that Baltimore has gone into the hands of the secessionists” (p. 2).

In the selected news items, rarely did the two newspapers mention Union and Confederate leadership. However, on May 2, both newspapers reported the ratification of the Confederate constitution and Jefferson Davis’ speech before the Confederate Congress, in which he said the South would “continue to struggle for
outherent right to freedom, independence, and self-government” (p. 2; p. 2) Also, it must be noted that initially, the Canadian press, in general, viewed Lincoln as being as weak as his predecessor, James Buchanan. Even George Brown, who advocated Lincoln’s presidency, referred to him once as a “fourth-rate lawyer” (Winks, 1971, p. 22). Still, during April, when The Globe referenced the Union president, it did so positively and viewed Lincoln’s actions as representative of the North’s great fight against slavery. An editorial in the April 8 Globe, for example, encouraged Lincoln to be decisive: “If . . . Mr. Lincoln is for war, then let him say so, and the loyal North will back him to the death” (p. 2). An editorial in the April 15 Globe, headlined “End of the First Act,” observed that Lincoln had “made up his mind as to his future course, and will probably pursue it with firmness and energy” (p. 2). Another editorial, in the April 20 Globe, said, “[T]he cause of which Mr. Lincoln is the representative. . . is a noble one” (p. 2). In an editorial in the April 27 Globe, Brown called those impatient New York editors critical of Lincoln and his administration’s war efforts “ridiculous” (p. 2). By April’s end, Brown wanted to see action by the “North and the North’s President” (p. 2). In good Canadian fashion, he urged them to “moderate their tone; threaten less; exasperate less; and do more” (April 30, 1861). One April editorial mentioned the absence of Jefferson Davis in public by saying, “There is something mysterious about the disappearance of President Jeff. Davis from the scene” (April 29, p. 2). While the editorial disclosed that Davis had been ill, it observed, “Nobody should set up in the trade of rebellion who is not proof against the ailments of humanity” (April 29, p. 2).

Comparatively, in The Gazette’s coverage, references to Lincoln were notably absent, and most news items about Lincoln referred to him as the “president” and not by name. During the 12 days leading up to the shelling of Fort Sumter, the newspaper contained no information about Lincoln’s responses to the dangerous situation in Charleston or the South in general. The single item mentioning Lincoln was in the April 10 Gazette. Headlined “United States Affairs,” the “Correspondent of the Montreal Gazette” in New York City informed readers, “Almost everybody here pities, ‘Old Abe.’” Further, the correspondent sniggered, “The poor man is frightened half to death. It is regarded as evident that he does not know his own mind” (p. 2). As for New Yorkers’ concerns about the impending conflict, the writer observed this about the city’s women:

The ladies. . . said if the war breaks out it will be very difficult for them to obtain the new fashions from Paris, which of course would be serious matter. They talk about presenting an address to their seceding sisters of the South asking as pathetically as possible whether [they] are prepared to sanction a course[,] which might cause a Paris bonnet to be six months in reaching this country (p. 2; italics in original; brackets added)

The only April items about Jefferson Davis appeared on April 23 and April 29 and noted that Jefferson Davis was about ready to march on Washington, D.C.

Several items in The Gazette expressed concerns about the economic impact of a civil war. Such editorial concern could be interpreted as representative of a conservative perspective. For example, “Letters from moneyed men in Europe” in the April 18 Gazette stated flatly that they had “no sympathy with the South
and no confidence in them” (p. 3). Another item in the May 18 Gazette observed that the “Crisis” will hurt U.S. economically more than England” (“American Crisis and British Commerce,” p. 1). An earlier item in the May 10 Gazette, headlined “Aspect of Commercial Affairs in the United States,” warned that the costs of war would be high and that a Union blockade of Southern ports was a “very severe measure” and that it would be “quite impossible to foretell the results [that would] arise from it” (p. 2). The following day, another Gazette article, from the paper’s special correspondent in New York, asked, “[W]hat will the South do for ice this season? She will have to get it from Canada.” Continuing, the correspondent wrote, “These [sic] are those who insist that the more ice is sent to the South the better, that is if the rebels would only take it in sufficient doses to cool their heads” (“United States Affairs,” May 11, 1861, p. 2).

Other findings: Race and racial equality
Other research findings related to U.S. events revealed The Globe’s progressive attitudes about race and racial equality. Two editorials, for example, said that the North should consider inciting slave insurrection or enlisting Blacks to end the conflict. The May 10 Globe item noted previously mentioning Canadian readiness to help the New York lumber industry also said, “Several troops of fugitive slaves are drilling, and were ready and anxious to cross over and attack the slave states, and will do so if an opportunity presents itself” (May 10, 1861, p. 2). An earlier editorial observed that “a slave insurrection as an accompaniment seems to be impending” (April 15, 1861), thus implying that slaves would begin their own fight for freedom. In a reference to the Harpers Ferry raid, one editorial noted that “there are John Browns” who could become part of a “[h]alf a dozen small parties landed at various parts of the Southern coast” to arm slaves. “The man of color makes a good soldier, orderly, skilful with weapons, and brave,” the editorial further observed (April 23, 1861, p. 2). Of course, in the nineteenth-century United States, the idea of encouraging slave insurrection or using Blacks in the military was unthinkable for even the most progressive Northerner.

Conclusion and suggestions for future research
This study of two newspapers indicates an emerging Canadian identity that was expressed in five prominent themes: identification as British, antipathy toward “Americanism” and suspicion of American democracy, fears of American militarism, patronizing sympathy for Americans in distress, and displays of liberal and conservative thought. Because this study has narrow parameters, generalizations about the Canadian press during this period cannot be supported. However, this research suggests much more study needs to be done on the Canadian press at the outbreak of the Civil War, as this period provides a rich vein of potential scholarship. First, a long-range study involving more nineteenth-century Canadian and American newspapers should be undertaken during this critical period in Canadian history, especially if the assertion that Canadian identity often puts the accent on America as “the Other” holds value.

Other research, for example, might examine Canadian and U.S. newspapers during the “Annexation Movement” that began in Montréal in the early 1850s. Germane to the present study, newspaper analysis of other events, such as the “Trent Affair,” which nearly pushed the United States and Britain into war by the
end of 1861, or the St. Albans raid by Confederate troops that came into Vermont from Canada, might provide further expressions of Canadian identity. Also, French-language newspapers and newspapers from the Maritimes must be included for a more comprehensive look at the press role in expressing a Canadian identity during the Civil War period.

Apart from an exploration of Canadian identity, a study of newspaper content could reveal important nineteenth-century views on race and public opinion. One project could focus on the Canadian press and slavery in Canada before the British ban in 1833. Another study could examine the press after the passage of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act. How, for example, did Canadian newspapers treat the influx of American slaves and free Blacks into Canada? Despite British North America’s general disdain for slavery, Blacks were not welcome universally, and part of the rationale behind British North America’s denouncement of the Fugitive Slave Act was that it did not want to see any more fugitive slaves coming into Canada (MacDonald, 1974).

Finally, while this research focused on expressions of Canadian identity, it also aimed at addressing the more fundamental question of what defines a nation. Benedict Anderson (1983) has said that a nation is “an imagined political community” that is “inherently limited and sovereign” (p. 6). In the months leading up to and following the outbreak of the U.S. Civil War, Canadians and their leaders struggled to assess what “inherently limited and sovereign” meant for Canada. Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, English Canada’s national identity was British. After Confederation in 1867, the effort to situate Canada’s identity in North America became more complex because of the tensions between Canada’s French- and English-speaking peoples and because of the imposing American presence. Of the latter, historian Robert A. Preston (1967) has observed that because Canada and the United States are close geographically and share a common language, it might be said that the two countries “know each other better than any two countries on earth” (p. 5). However, this closeness has been both a curse and a blessing for Canadians, and for Canadians it has become a defining national characteristic that requires further study.

Notes
1. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 2006 Popular Culture Association’s Annual Conference, Atlanta, GA.
2. All date references for The Globe and The Gazette refer to the year 1861 unless otherwise stated.
3. Two reports in April referenced Canada. One Gazette item, headlined “The U.S. Tariff—Effects on Canadian Trade,” noted “On April Fool’s Day the United States new tariff went into effect . . .” (April 10, 1861, p.2), and one editorial in the April 15 Globe observed that British American colonies “are likely to be benefited by emigration, in consequence of the American troubles” (p. 2.).
4. Among the estimated influx of 15,000 to 100,000 Southern refugees who fled to Canada by 1863 were certainly Southern agents (Careless, 1963).
5. Because of Canada’s anti-slavery posture, many Northern anti-slavery advocates assumed wrongly that Canada would sympathize with the Union. For example, the Massachusetts abolitionist Theodore Parker, one of John Brown’s secret financiers, predicted that Canada would naturally “be the great and reliable ally of the Northern States, in the coming struggle with slavery” (Winks, 1971, p. 9). While an estimated 48,000 Canadians eventually fought for the North during the Civil War, with some 18,000 killed (MacDonald, 1974), many of those soldiers, especially from Canada East, enlisted because of the large bounties offered by the North.
6. A Globe editorial, on April 24, insisted that the South was not prepared for war, and two days later, the paper predicted that a now “roused” North “will fight to the last” (April 26, 1861, p. 2). Five days later, on April 29, a Globe editorial further asserted that the “vigour of the North” had “checked the ardor [sic] of the South,” blaming the conflict on the South’s bullying of the North (p. 2).

References (Newspapers)

The Gazette
April 12, 1861, “Impending Civil War in the United States,” p. 5.
April 15, 1861, “Civil War in the United States,” p. 2.
April 18, 1861, p. 3. [Editorial]
May 1, 1861, p.1. [Editorial]
May 9, 1861, “Are We Prepared for War?” p. 2.
May 9, 1861, “Diplomatic Correspondence on the U. States Affairs,” p. 2.

The Globe
December 20, 1860, “North and South,” p. 2.
April 4, 1861, “Canada from an American View,” p. 2.

References


