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**EXPLAINING BERNARDO:
HOW THE PRESS COVERS CRIME**

by

MARCIE J. GRAY, B.J.

**A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of**

Master of Journalism

School of Journalism and Communication

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

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**"EXPLAINING BERNARDO
HOW THE PRESS COVERS CRIME"**
submitted by Marcie J Gray, B J.
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the degree of Master of Journalism

Thesis Supervisor

Director, School of Journalism and Communication

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Abstract

This thesis examines whether press coverage of Paul Bernardo's trial (for the kidnapping, sexual assaults and murders of two teenaged girls) affirms the academic view that certain factors influence the media to construct news, which supports the status quo. Such news would portray Bernardo as a monster, or creature existing outside of society. Thus, any responsibility society may have in creating Bernardo would be ignored. The factors considered are business, journalists' personal biases, bureaucracy and cultural concepts. The factor of business is dismissed as a viable object of study in this thesis, and the evaluation of personal biases is limited to those of columnists, as opposed to those of news reporters. The thesis finds that the innovation of assigning columnists to the trial every day altered the overall coverage, they provided a more complex view of Bernardo, his ex-wife Karla Homolka and his victims. Still, the various factors, particularly bureaucracy, prevented journalists from fully explaining Bernardo during the trial.

To Mom and Dad

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Introduction

Sicko Lecher Freak Bent Broken. Empty. Rotten Heartless. Deviant Maniac Egomaniac Narcissistic. Hedonistic.¹ These are just a handful of the names lawyer John Rosen called his client, Paul Bernardo. Rosen was making his closing argument, and he was repeating some of the names that journalists and others have used to try to describe the man on trial for the rapes and murders of two teenaged girls in Southern Ontario. During Bernardo's trial, journalists sat through hours of videotape evidence, listening to his kidnapped victims scream and beg for mercy. They listened--the judge forbade them from actually viewing the tapes--as Bernardo ordered the girls to call him "master" and fulfil his sexual desires. The journalists observed his ex-wife, Karla Homolka, testify about how she helped him confine and rape the girls. And in the end, they watched as Bernardo took the stand, admitting to everything but murder. His lawyer confessed that Bernardo may be all the things people have labelled him. "'But what he is not, members of the jury, is a murderer. He may in fact, be the devil incarnate, but even the devil is due the benefit of the law.'"²

Until the jury found Bernardo guilty, he did have a certain benefit of the law--journalists had to refrain from calling him a murderer. Because he soon admitted to the kidnappings and sexual assaults, though, journalists had some freedom in stamping other

¹Scott Burnside and Alan Cairns, "Almost every name in the book: Lawyer rattles off descriptions of Bernardo," Toronto Sun 29 Aug. 1995: p. 21.

²Burnside and Cairns, "Giving the 'devil' his due: Bernardo guilty, but not of murder Defence," Toronto Sun 29 Aug. 1995: p. 4

labels on him. Usually, however, they did so via other people. By repeating what others had to say about Bernardo, journalists protected their supposed objectivity. But one may question whether they did a thorough, in-depth job of describing Bernardo and explaining how he came to be. Did they go beyond labels? Or did one dominant label--that of the monster--take precedence, as journalists constructed a tale of an evil creature existing outside of society?

Such story construction is not a new topic of discussion among those who study the media. It has long been held that all journalism is a matter of construction, as each reporter perceives, selects and puts together information in his or her own way. Indeed, two books, which provide essential reading, have main titles that point to this process. They are called The Manufacture of News and Manufacturing the News.³ The authors, along with other scholars, consider whether in manufacturing news, the media are influenced to produce a version of reality that promotes the dominant institutions and tenets of society. I will examine this proposition in view of the Bernardo trial. Specifically, I will strive to answer the following question: does the coverage of the Bernardo trial affirm the academic viewpoint that journalists covering crime encounter forces in their daily routines, which cause them to construct news that supports the status quo?

By status quo, I mean the dominant conservative institutions, and the ideologies which have traditionally informed them. For example, I will consider the role patriarchy

³Stanley Cohen and Jock Young, eds., The Manufacture of News: Social Problems, Deviance and the Mass Media (London: Constable and Co., 1973); and Mark Fishman, Manufacturing the News (Austin: U of Texas P, 1980).

may have played in influencing journalists to depict Bernardo as a monster, his accomplice as either a helpless victim or evil woman, and his victims as cardboard angels or vamps. If a morality play emerged, in which a monster ravaged virgins, society's role in the creation of Bernardo would be rejected. Any aspects of our society, such as the prevalence of pornography (including violent pornography), which may demean women, and even foster a hatred of women, would be ignored. Consequently, society's conservative institutions (such as the legal system), and ideologies supporting them, could continue unquestioned.⁴

I believe this thesis can contribute to the long-standing, important debate about how the media cover crime. The debate is long-standing because scholars have spent much time remarking upon how journalists and editors have traditionally devoted a great deal of space to crime. Indeed, scholars have pointed out tendencies, such as how crime stories with banner headlines often appear on the front page.⁵ These scholars ask why crime news receives this attention. Furthermore, the debate is important because it involves the question of how news reports may affect public opinion. People studying the media have reached varying conclusions as to whether articles reverse, alter or simply reinforce existing opinions. Many studies indicate that the media may have no effect. These studies present findings in which official police statistics, not the media, appear to influence

⁴Karla Homolka would add an unusual element to the story; rarely are a man and woman accused of committing such heinous crimes together. If journalists portrayed her as a flat character, whether as a helpless victim or evil woman, they would have contributed to the morality play of a monster and virgins. Homolka's depiction will be considered in a later chapter.

⁵Carolyn A. Stroman and Richard Seltzer, "Media Use and Perceptions of Crime," Journalism Quarterly vol. 62 (1985): p. 340.

people's views of crime.⁶ Amid this controversy, scholars generally agree that today, few people in Western society have direct experiences of crime. Instead, most people learn of crime through newspapers, television or the radio. Stroman and Seltzer refer to a poll in which 95 per cent of the participants named the mass media as the main source of their information about crime.⁷ This situation makes an evaluation of the media's potential effect on the public all the more important. Unfortunately, such an evaluation must be thought of as a step that this paper is unprepared to take. It would involve canvassing public opinion, and this thesis will focus on an analysis of newspaper articles and interviews with journalists. The thesis will, however, take an important first step, in evaluating whether the media, in covering the Bernardo trial, encountered forces that caused them to try to influence public opinion in favor of the status quo.

Furthermore, I believe that the Bernardo trial holds special significance for the examination of crime coverage, because the sensational trial amplified the pressures under which journalists worked, providing an enlarged picture of everyday routines. Indeed, I see the coverage of the Bernardo trial as the ultimate microcosm of Canadian media coverage of crime. The Bernardo trial provided journalists with a day-in, day-out race through the obstacle course of the court system, in which the typical pressures (such as deadlines and publicity bans) were experienced tenfold. Journalists were expected to write lengthy articles or produce succinct radio or television stories nearly every single

⁶Jack Katz, "What Makes Crime 'News'?", Media Culture & Society vol. 9 (1987) pp. 59-60. Katz cites findings by Stinchcombe et al., Jacob, Roshier and others that public views of crime tend to parallel official statistics, rather than media images.

⁷Stroman and Seltzer, p. 340.

day, and they had to decide which horrific details were not too horrific to omit. After censoring themselves, they had to fight to keep their versions from being censored further by editors and media lawyers. The intense, constant pressure to produce compelling crime stories provides an ideal opportunity for an examination of how the media cover crime.

Some may argue that the Bernardo trial and its coverage were too extreme, too sensational--too much. These critics may say that a more appropriate study would focus on the coverage of less publicized cases, cases that involved less dramatic circumstances. I agree that such a study would be valuable, but I maintain that coverage of the Bernardo trial also deserves attention. Certainly, the media pushed the customary limits of crime coverage. For instance, the Toronto Star and the Toronto Sun assigned columnists to the trial on a full-time basis. Other Canadian newspapers have done this before, but never for such a long trial that held national attention day after day. The move by the Star and the Sun provides an additional reason for looking at the coverage. These newspapers introduced a special element to crime coverage, which may influence future reporting. In assigning columnists, the dailies wanted to supplement the work of reporters, who were recounting the details of each day in court. The columnists considered the characters of the courtroom players and why they behaved as they did. This analysis added a new dimension to courtroom coverage; the columnists were free to state their opinions about Bernardo and Homolka while the trial was still in session.

Of course, that freedom was limited--columnists, perhaps more than reporters, had to battle editors and media lawyers who wanted to change their stories to avoid inciting anyone to legal action. Columnists and reporters say that such battles took place

regularly, and one particular battle ended with the columnist being taken off the field. Rosie DiManno, the columnist for the Star, had written her daily piece and had agreed to certain changes. Later that night, senior management called her at home and told her it had decided not to publish her column. The next day, she refused to go to work. Consequently, the Star pulled her from the trial and found another columnist to replace her. Struggles such as this one show the operational pressures under which journalists work. I believe an analysis of the coverage of the Bernardo trial will help illuminate why media present crime in the way they do, as well as the extent to which the media may go

In conducting my analysis, I will begin by examining the academic writing pertaining to the manufacture of news and, in particular, crime news. I will start by looking at Cohen and Young's two models of media: the "Mass Manipulative" model and the "Commercial Laissez-Fair" model. The former claims that the media actively construct news, which supports the status quo. The latter model states that the media, simply reflecting reality, provide news that the public demands.⁸ These models sit at opposite ends of a wide spectrum. Within this spectrum, I will consider four sources of potential influence in the production of news: business, journalists' personal biases, bureaucracy, and cultural concepts. By the influence of business, I mean the Western media's capitalist facet. In speaking of personal biases, I mean a journalist's tendency to hold liberal or conservative views; I want to examine whether journalists generally lean to the right, and whether this bias appears in their articles. At this point, I must note that I will distinguish between two

⁸Stanley Cohen and Jock Young, eds., "Part One The Process of Selection," The Manufacture of News: Social Problems, Deviance and the Mass Media (London Constable and Co., 1973), p. 15.

types of journalists: reporters and columnists. The academic literature I will review focuses on news reporters, who have the job of communicating facts (as opposed to columnists, whose job is to show their liberal or conservative biases when writing about their opinions). When I finish examining the academic literature, and begin discussing articles (including columns) written during the Bernardo trial, I will consider the distinction between reporters and columnists in regard to personal biases. The third influence, bureaucracy, has two faces in this thesis. I will look at both the bureaucracy of the media (often massive and complex organizations) and of the institutions which they cover. Finally, by cultural concepts, I mean widely shared ideas, encompassing values that often lead to stereotypes.

In evaluating these influences, I will determine which ones appear to be plausible and provable forces, which may cause journalists to construct news that supports the status quo. Then I will examine the coverage of the Bernardo trial, to see whether it affirms the academic viewpoint that this news construction does take place. For example, I will consider bureaucratic influences in operation. The journalists faced intense pressure to tell compelling stories, which were followed closely by huge audiences. They had to tell those stories within tight deadlines, and newspaper reporters often had to fill several pages. The bureaucracy of the media was coupled with the bureaucracy of the court system, as journalists found themselves interviewing officials. Their access to Bernardo and Homolka was extremely limited. Journalists could record the words the former husband and wife said in court, but could not probe their thoughts by asking them questions. Meanwhile, the journalists were operating in a system that aims to label someone as a

criminal and punish that person, in order to show people how they ought to act for society to function properly.

To examine whether the coverage of the Bernardo trial affirms the academic viewpoint, I will conduct a qualitative review of newspaper articles and columns written during the trial. I will not conduct a quantitative analysis. Instead, I will look for motifs and patterns that emerge, organizing the trial coverage. These motifs and patterns may be formed by the written word, as well as by a page's layout, including the selection and placement of photographs and drawings. I will consider how the motifs and patterns may have resulted from the various influences, and provide the thoughts behind the written words. I have interviewed all but one of the trial reporters and columnists for the Toronto Star, the Toronto Sun and the Globe and Mail. They shared their experiences and how they approached covering the trial.

In conducting my analysis, I will look at only newspapers. While broadcasters devote much time to crime, and spent considerable resources on the Bernardo trial in particular, television and radio broadcasts present certain research difficulties. Newscasts are ephemeral; in order to study them, one must record them at specific times of the day. A newspaper, in contrast, is a record made to last. A person can pick up a newspaper at any time of the day, and can easily find previous editions at libraries. As well, newscasts possess an element lacking in newspapers--the spoken word. Announcers and reporters can emphasize words or use different tones (and, with television, different facial expressions) to add meaning to the denotative content of a story. A researcher may or may not note these audio or visual cues when referring to the written script of a news

story. People assessing the research must go to the trouble of finding the original tapes if they want to check for these cues. Researchers dealing solely with newspapers, however, can recite passages and then apply their interpretations, which critics can readily assess. While newspapers provide pictures, which can add further dimensions to stories, people who want to judge a researcher's assessment of a picture (or lack of assessment) have a permanent record to which they may turn.

I will also limit my analysis to the Star, the Sun and the Globe. These papers published stories about the trial in nearly every edition. The latter two papers sometimes filled four or more pages of a single edition with details of the trial. I feel that expanding my analysis to include other papers would make my report unwieldy. Furthermore, I believe that journalists at these newspapers were working under somewhat usual conditions. They were covering a court case in their hometown; most of the reporters normally covered the crime beat; and they were used to competing against each other in the same market. Thus, their work can provide insight to how reporters at large dailies typically cover crime. At the same time, innovations undertaken by the papers--such as assigning columnists full-time--expand the discussion about crime coverage and show how journalists work under extreme pressure. Finally, the papers provide an appropriate focus of study because they serve Canada's largest market (Toronto, in which the trial took place), while aiming to please different niches. The Globe, claiming to be Canada's national newspaper, strives to attract an upscale, business-oriented market. The Star, serving Toronto and its suburbs, aims for a "family" audience. Meanwhile, the Sun, also serving the greater Toronto area, focuses on a blue-collar readership.

These papers started publishing articles about Bernardo long before his trial commenced. Intense media coverage began during the hunt for Kristen French's killer, and continued after Bernardo was arrested. Months passed, and a publication ban prevented the media from printing or broadcasting the details of Homolka's murder trial. Yet the newspapers kept the story alive, publishing articles, editorials and letters to the editor about the ban itself. I want to recognize the breadth of this story, and may refer, on occasion, to news articles that were published before or after the trial, but otherwise, I will limit my analysis to coverage during the trial. Such a limitation is necessary because the trial alone produced hundreds of articles. Trying to include a thorough examination of articles published before and after the trial would make my paper cumbersome and disperse my focus on journalists working in the relatively controlled atmosphere of the court system.

Chapter One

According to Cohen and Young, academics and journalists look to one of two models to describe the media: the "Mass Manipulative" model or the "Commercial Laissez-Faire" model. As its title indicates, the first model posits that the media work to manipulate public opinion; they endeavour to support the status quo. Under orders from newspaper and broadcast owners, reporters are active tools in the huge, capitalist enterprises called the media. These journalists perceive, select and present news in such a way as to promote the owners' interests. These interests are often varied, for besides the commercial success of their advertisers, media proprietors today must protect the success of other companies i.e. which they personally have a stake. Typically, their media holdings are only part of huge conglomerates. The owners have no wish to change the current political structure, because it is based in capitalism and supports conglomeration, as well as the concentration of media outlets in a limited number of hands.⁹

The Commercial Laissez-Faire model, in contrast, depicts reporters as objective collectors of facts. The reporters merely record what is happening in the world and relate these events to audience members, who then choose that which they wish to perceive. Stories may confirm, but rarely change, the readers' and viewers' established ideas and attitudes. Admittedly, journalists cannot gather all facts and recount them to the audience; some selection must take place. Thus, reporters rely on a set of criteria, or news values, to help them determine which happenings would be of interest to the audience.

⁹Cohen and Young, p. 17.

It is not that instruction manuals exist telling newsmen [sic] that certain subjects (drugs, sex, violence) will always appeal to the public or that certain groups (youth, celebrities, immigrants) should be continually exposed to scrutiny. Rather, there are built-in factors, ranging from the individual newsman's [sic] intuitive hunch about what constitutes a 'good' story, through precepts such as 'give the public what it wants'... ¹⁰

According to Cohen and Young, the built-in factors are seen as intrinsic to a newsworthy event. ¹¹

Thus, the Mass Manipulative model, where media are seen as actively influencing the final news product, may sit at one end of a broad spectrum. At the other end, the Commercial Laissez-Faire model sits demurely, offering a view of media as pristine mirrors of reality. Along this spectrum may be placed four sources of influence: business, journalists' personal biases, bureaucracy, and cultural concepts. From the brief sketch of the models provided above, we can already see that the influence of business may tend toward the end anchored by the Mass Manipulative model. One may think that the media's business interests overtly affect the content of newspapers and newscasts, through a publisher's orders to write upbeat stories about certain products and companies, for instance. Cirino, one of the strongest proponents of the Mass Manipulative model, points out that owners may actually support their interests, and consequently, the status quo, by employing a conspiracy of silence. They can order editors to omit certain stories, or certain parts of stories, that reflect poorly upon owners' business interests. "The citizen can't possibly be aware of what was left out even if he [sic] stopped to analyze the

¹⁰Cohen and Young, p. 16.

¹¹Cohen and Young, p. 15.

shortened news article. The editors leave no blank spaces."¹²

For example, Cirino says that in 1969, the American media paid little or no attention to the problem of feeding the poor. Millions of people could not afford to eat properly. Yet the media found prime space to headline quick-fix governmental proposals, such as President Richard Nixon's proposition to expand the food stamp program. The story became front-page news. Six months later, however, when Senator George McGovern said in an interview on Face the Nation that the Nixon administration had actively opposed a new food-stamp bill, the New York Times buried the accusation on page twenty-six, giving the story a small headline and only six inches of space. Cirino writes, "This is obvious playing down of the news item. Sunday interview shows usually are priority news items: Face the Nation received first or second-page coverage in the New York Times for all 52 of its interviews in the year ending June, 1969."¹³ The scholar says that the media were protecting the status quo; by ignoring the pervasive problem of the hungry poor, and focusing on governmental stop-gap measures, the media convinced the public that the State was operating appropriately and conscientiously.¹⁴

The media, Cirino says, have also omitted information in order to protect their advertisers. He says that as early as 1938, doctors were warning that smoking could shorten a person's lifespan.

¹²Robert Cirino, "Bias Through Selection and Omission: Automobile Safety, Smoking," The Manufacture of News: Social Problems, Deviance and the Mass Media, eds. Stanley Cohen and Jock Young (London: Constable and Co., 1973), p. 42.

¹³Cirino, p.43.

¹⁴Cirino, p. 43.

...for years such information was censored or played down by the media-- to such an extent that even as late as 1958 only 44 per cent of the people thought smoking a cause of lung cancer. Those who would never have begun smoking, or would have quit had they known the health hazards earlier, have cause to blame the media for robbing them of life itself¹⁵

Cirino clearly believes that the media directly influence the thoughts and actions of the audience. This belief is a cornerstone of the Mass Manipulative model

Relatively few academics share Cirino's extreme view that the media conspire to promote the status quo. His critics readily admit that Western media are capitalist enterprises, and the concentration of ownership is increasing, but they contend that owners do not step into the newsroom to dictate editorial policy. Believing the opposite "...ignores the observable fact that reporters often initiate stories of their own, that editors rarely meet with publishers, and that most working journalists have no idea who sits on the board of directors of the institutions they work for."¹⁶ The critics say the conspiracy theory is too simplistic. It fails to acknowledge other factors at work, such as the influences of bureaucracy and cultural concepts.

Before examining these sources of influence, I will consider the influence of journalists' personal biases. While journalists may apply their biases to change the way people think and act, they do not necessarily strive to support the status quo. Indeed, some academic writers contend that journalists actively work to reform or even overthrow the status quo: "the press has sometimes been characterized as adversarial or even

¹⁵Cirino, p. 54.

¹⁶Michael Schudson, "The Sociology of News Production," Media Culture & Society vol. 11 (1989): p. 267.

nihilistic, system attacking or system denigrating, government toppling or crime promoting.”¹⁷ Thus, the Mass Manipulative model cannot necessarily claim that journalists’ biases function to preserve society’s conservative hegemony. Journalists supposedly wish to manipulate public opinion, but not in favour of the political consensus. They want to stamp their liberal biases upon society.

According to Lotz, Richard Nixon aimed this criticism at “elite media” such as the Washington Post. The former American president complained that since the beginning of his career, the press had set out to destroy his character, lobbing accusations of “bigamy, forgery, drunkenness, insanity, thievery, anti-Semitism, perjury--the whole gamut of misconduct in public affairs.”¹⁸ Yet, Lotz points out, Nixon failed to give any evidence to support his allegation. Furthermore, later in Nixon’s career, he received preferential treatment by the media, Lotz contends. During his first campaign, for every news story that papers published about the incumbent, they published more than two and a half stories about Nixon. Two editorials favouring the incumbent were lost in a sea of thirty-eight editorials backing Nixon.¹⁹ Yet the politician still proclaimed that journalists were conspiring against him. Other conservatives joined in the complaints, which were eventually supported by a 1986 study of employees at “elite media” such as the Washington Post, New York Times and the ABC, CBS and NBC television networks.

¹⁷Schudson, p. 267.

¹⁸Roy Edward Lotz, Crime and the American Press (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1991), p. 71.

¹⁹Lotz, p. 72.

[The study] claimed that news people form a homogeneous white male elite who (1) were raised in the large cities of the northeast by upper-middle-class parents and (2) hold leftist views on social issues. Earlier, Nixon expressed the same idea: "the New York Times, Washington Post, Time, Newsweek and the three television networks, you will find overwhelmingly that their editorial bias comes down on the side of amnesty, pot and abortion."²⁰

In the 1986 study, Lichter, Rothman and Lichter interviewed employees and handed out questionnaires. Lotz says that the researchers may have found that news workers possess liberal viewpoints, but that these viewpoints may not necessarily be reflected in news copy. Reporters, striving to achieve that journalistic ideal, objectivity, or to keep editors from chastising them for biased writing, may consciously avoid imposing their personal opinions on their stories. Thus, Lotz states, the appropriate object of evaluation is the final news product, not the reporter's mindset.²¹

Consequently, Lotz conducted his own study, examining the contents of the Washington Post, Chicago Tribune and Philadelphia Inquirer during six weeks in July and August, 1987. Lotz wanted to find out if liberal reporters applied their biases to the presentation of news concerning deviance and social problems. In other words, he wanted to discover whether, as Nixon claimed, the press advocates issues such as amnesty, pot and abortion. Some of these issues may be defined as crimes--depending on who is doing the defining.

According to Lotz, people who regard deviance as "definable", who suggest that different people may see certain activities as either acceptable or unacceptable, lean to the

²⁰Lotz, p. 73

²¹Lotz, p. 84.

left. They believe that no single behaviour is intrinsically deviant; it is all a matter of perspective. Known as the labelling, interactionist, or transactional theory, this approach to deviance calls for scepticism on the part of criminologists and journalists alike.

...when [this tradition] sees terms like 'deviant', it asks, 'deviant to whom?' or 'deviant from what?'; when told that something is a social problem, it asks 'problematic to whom?'; when certain conditions or behaviour are described as dysfunctional, embarrassing, threatening or dangerous, it asks, 'says who?' and 'why?'²²

Academic writers assert that society's dominant groups determine what is prohibited and what is permissible. They label "offending" people as deviants, and look to these people to re-offend. Ostracized from the majority of "good" citizens, these individuals may have to find a way to live on the outskirts of society, committing more deviant acts to survive. Thus, a self-fulfilling prophecy may occur.²³

Journalists who question the status quo of deviancy (and criminality) may be seen as applying their liberal biases when they manufacture news. In his study, Lotz found, however, that journalists reporting at "elite" newspapers--which are supposedly esteemed and, thus, deemed respectable--seldom present the offenders of established social codes of conduct as people who, under their own codes, are acting perfectly normally. Instead, those who harass black people and women are depicted as racist and sexist; under the labelling theory, the liberal media might have proclaimed that people should respect the discriminators' points of view. Child abusers, seen as criminals in Western society, receive

²²Stanley Cohen, Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1972), p. 12.

²³Lotz, pp. 73-4.

no sympathy from the press.²⁴ Neither do drug users, buyers or pushers. These people, often addicts, may be caught in a lifestyle of violence and disease (spread through the use of contaminated needles) from which they cannot escape. Meanwhile, the people who control the drug trade, selling narcotics to the street pushers, profit enormously. Ignoring this perspective, newspapers share the political consensus, and depict those in the drug trade as "alien invaders" who bring drugs into the United States.²⁵ Furthermore, these aliens are dangerous evildoers:

Horror stories play a leading role in conventional lore about drugs, but we do not expect newspapers to print them, because so often they are apocryphal. The Washington Post, however, wrote about a woman who, after smoking PCP, stabbed a man several times with a butcher knife. Police summoned to her apartment found her standing naked at the window, holding a book in one hand and the knife in the other. Chanting incoherently about Satan, she emerged from the apartment, then stabbed herself in the eye, chest, and abdomen.²⁶

Without question, the Washington Post reporter has taken a label and stamped it on this woman: drugged-up devil worshipper. Proponents of the labelling theory--supposedly the liberal-biased media--would not be pleased.

Thus, we see that, despite accusations that the American press leans to the left, journalists' liberal biases do not seem to appear in news stories about deviant behaviour. Indeed, the news products appear to support the status quo. Perhaps this is a result of over-compensation. Journalists, wishing to disguise their liberal tendencies, may

²⁴Lotz, pp. 76-77, 80-81.

²⁵Lotz, p. 83.

²⁶Lotz, p. 84.

consciously step to the right when they report. Another possibility is that journalists, under pressure from the media's business interests, put aside their liberal biases to manipulate the masses in favor of the status quo.²⁷

These viewpoints are either too simplistic or too difficult to prove. I have established the fact that there is no obvious direct relationship between media owners and journalists. While the media's business side may influence the final media product, journalists are not involved in a grand conspiracy to support the status quo. Furthermore, news reporters do not appear to consciously apply their biases to reform or subvert the status quo. Rather, they may recognize their biases and, in trying to achieve objectivity, actually lean too far in the opposite direction; consequently, liberal-minded journalists may produce articles with conservative slants. Of course, columnists are supposed to reveal their biases, so that one may presume that columns directly reflect the authors' mindsets. Thus, I will draw a distinction between reporters and columnists, deeming only the latter worthy of attention when considering personal biases. Attempting to link the former's personal biases to their news reports would be a specious endeavor.

Other, more provable and logical sources of influence upon the final media product include bureaucracy. News organizations, working as bureaucracies in a bureaucratic world, approach the production of news in particular ways. According to Rock, journalists face a world of ambiguous happenings; they have little guidance in deciding what may be of interest to the audience.

²⁷Yet another possibility exists; perhaps the 1986 study on the media elite was wrong, and today's respected reporters actually lean to the right.

Journalists and sociologists alike maintain that the world does not appear to reporters as a clearly structured entity. A few of its happenings have become remarkable by convention. Aircraft crashes and elections are routinely reported. Other happenings are so engineered that they become eminently reportable. The rest is ambiguous and perplexing.²⁸

Some journalists contend that reporters must rely on an innate news sense to decide that which merits attention. (One may wonder how editors could test potential reporters for this "natural" news sense.)

In contrast, Rock states that news organizations rely on the institutional imperatives of space and time to bring order to their otherwise chaotic universe. Reporters must fill predetermined spaces in newspapers (the "news hole") every twenty-four hours. "Each edition must convey a coherent and persuasive portrait of the world, each must be significantly differentiated from its predecessors and successors, and each one must have some thematic continuity with other editions."²⁹ Consequently, reporters cover scheduled events and speeches that can guarantee a new angle to an old story. They depend upon institutions such as the police and the courts--established settings, which produce information on a regular basis.³⁰ "Thus, in the place of random search, newsgathering takes routine forms. Those forms can be continually maintained only if they are supported

²⁸Paul Rock, "News as Eternal Recurrence," The Manufacture of News: Social Problems, Deviance and the Mass Media, eds. Stanley Cohen and Jock Young (London: Constable and Co., 1973), p. 74

²⁹Rock, p. 76.

³⁰According to Sherizen, crime in general provides a regular supply of stories. "The predictability of crime as a repeating event but with changes in participants and locations creates the same old story but with a newness every day." Sanford Sherizen, "Social Creation of Crime News: All the News Fitted to Print," Deviance and Mass Media, ed. Charles Winick (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1978), p. 208

by a set of operating assumptions about the world and about the newspapers' place in that world."¹

One routine form of newsgathering is the beat system. According to Fishman, this tradition is so well established in newspapers that those papers which forego the system are seen as experimental.² That the system bolsters the bureaucratic character of newspapers is evident by the fact that while reporters may change beats, the essential structure of each beat remains the same. Furthermore, the dual conception of covering a beat shows that the beat system ties reporters into other bureaucracies of power. A reporter may cover stories about a particular field of interest, such as justice or the law. The reporter, then, takes a topical approach to the beat. He or she tells stories about specific happenings that may be united under the broad banner of "justice". At the same time, however, the reporter takes a territorial approach to the beat, actually making the rounds through places such as police headquarters and the courthouse. This view of the beat, as locations to be physically covered, places the reporter inside bureaucratic institutions.³

The reporter spends his or her time talking to officials (for example, the court clerk), examining official documents (the docket) and observing official activities (the trial). In fact, the reporter's beat is structured as a tour (or "round", as Fishman calls it) through various related institutions.

¹Rock, p. 77.

²Fishman, p. 27.

³Fishman, pp. 28-9.

The round has a day-in-day-out repetitive character, a stability over time. It consists of a series of locations that the reporter moves through in an orderly, scheduled sequence...People begin to recognize specific journalists, inquire who they are, and start up conversations with them. The possibility of forming relationships with these potential news sources is at hand.³⁴

The round, however, has a limited number of stops. Following a justice reporter at a California daily, the Purissima Record, Fishman found that the reporter visited the city police, county sheriffs and the superior court. Bureaucratic institutions and agencies such as the FBI branch office, local chapters of the American Civil Liberties Union and the American Bar Association, and every private detective agency were not included as stops on the round. The journalist may still consult these sources of information, but they do not receive consistent attention. Neither do "unofficial" sources of justice news--sources that may be found in the inner-city slums and downtown office towers often located right outside the doors of a city's police headquarters and courthouses.

Specifically, the [Purissima Record justice] journalist had no regular contact with the underlife of prisons and jails; the unofficially sanctioned practices of law enforcement, judicial and penal personnel; the entire spectrum of deviant subcultures (from the world of winos to the stable corporate arrangements for price fixing); and the local markets for stolen goods, illegal drugs, and pornography.³⁵

Many academic writers have noted how depending upon official sources affects the content of news. Fishman says that reporters see unofficial accounts as "soft" information; it may provide an idea for a story, but journalists must verify the information with an official source, so that they may have "hard" data with which they can write a

³⁴Fishman, pp. 43-4.

³⁵Fishman, p. 45.

credible story. Reporters see these official sources as reliable because society has given the sources jurisdiction over particular fields of knowledge. "Journalists believe that bureaucrats are not only in a position to know certain things but that these officials ought to know what they are in a position to know."³⁶ When an official cannot provide the requested information, journalists complain and may even mention the source's "incompetence" in a news story. When officials are seen as doing their job--meeting the journalists' requests for information--that information is treated as factual.³⁷

Thus, journalists secure the information they need to fill the news hole. But they accomplish more than that, Hall points out. They also bolster their own professional image. By referring to an official source to differentiate between fact and opinion, journalists (news reporters, not columnists) maintain their objectivity.

Ironically, the very rules which aim to preserve the impartiality of the media, and which grew out of desires for greater professional neutrality, also serve powerfully to orientate the media in the 'definitions of social reality' which their 'accredited sources'--the institutional spokesmen [sic]--provide.³⁸

Unofficial viewpoints may be included as journalists strive to achieve balance as well as objectivity. However, the official sources receive preferential treatment. They are the "primary definers", as their opinions on any particular topic set a news article's framework. The unofficial sources must then respond within that framework.

³⁶Fishman, p. 95.

³⁷Fishman, pp. 95-6.

³⁸Stuart Hall, et al., Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order (London: MacMillan Press, 1978), p. 58.

"Contributions which stray from this framework are exposed to the charge that they are 'not addressing the problem'."³⁹ They are deemed irrelevant

Some dissension exists among academic writers as to how closely the most relied-upon sources are tied to bureaucracy. According to Sherizen, police officers on the street are not wrapped up in the bureaucratic justice structure. Yet he says that when selecting information for the construction of crime news, reporters are affected by their relationship with these officers just as much as they are affected by bureaucratic factors such as the press's own institutional imperative to fill the news hole. Sherizen says that crime reporters and lower-level police officers spend their time away from their institutions--the newspaper and the police station, respectively.

Both [these reporters and officers] are assigned to beats, where they are outside of the physical confines of the organization. By being 'on the streets' as part of their job, they are in the position of being outside many major modes of socialization by which higher-ups establish control over their peer's behaviors and perceptions.⁴⁰

A symbiotic relationship develops between crime reporter and beat cop, says Sherizen. The officer gets to define the problems and solutions of crime, for instance. Meanwhile, the reporter comes to depend upon the officer, who is always at the scene of the crime, ready to provide a factual account. Here, at least, Sherizen agrees with other writers; the officer provides an "official" version of events that goes unquestioned. Thus, whether or not one sees lower-level officers as part of the bureaucratic structure, a person in a

³⁹Hall, p. 59.

⁴⁰Sherizen, p. 211.

socially-sanctioned position still provides the supposedly credible worldview.⁴¹

While Sherizen may dismiss bureaucracies as influential news sources, Rock, Fishman and Hall provide a compelling argument that news organizations, depending upon bureaucratic society to meet their own structural needs, accept the worldview of dominant institutions. Of course, Hall says, this does not mean that all the news organizations produce identical newspapers and broadcasts. He points out that the media take an active role in transforming the raw materials into the finished products. Two main activities are at work: selecting and coding. In considering newspapers, Hall notes that all are driven by similar bureaucratic exigencies, so that all are oriented toward selecting information

⁴¹Sherizen, p. 211.

One may note that Sherizen writes specifically about "crime" reporters; perhaps he separates these reporters from "justice" reporters, such as the one Fishman observed. If Sherizen had meant to make this differentiation, he might have found that justice reporters, working outside the reporter-beat cop relationship, provided consistent coverage of the courts and penal system. Instead, in a study of four Chicago newspapers, he finds that a majority of news coverage is devoted to the events leading up to and including arrests. According to Sherizen, this results because the reporter who covers the police (whether known as a crime or justice reporter) is dependent upon the lower-level officer. Writes Sherizen,

Post-arrest activities of the police are less seldom given to reporters since this information could only result from a change in the police-reporter relationship. Receiving such information would mean that a reporter's activities would generally be confined to the police headquarters, higher ranking officers would automatically be involved, and, most importantly, the development and release of information would be under the bureaucratic control of departmental rules (p. 212).

Fishman would dispute Sherizen's findings, asserting that, in fact, police headquarters and courts, as part of the justice beat, receive consistent attention.

Soothill and Walby would also likely object to a generalization of Sherizen's study. These authors found that when covering a sex crime, British reporters pay great attention to the police search for a suspect, but they also closely follow the trial. Once convicted, however, criminals receive little coverage.

Keith Soothill and Sylvia Walby, Sex Crime in the News (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 32-3.

provided by the "primary definers"--the power brokers. However, newspapers may treat that information differently, depending on factors such as their particular sense of newsworthiness, their organizational make-up (for example, how many reporters cover an area of news, such as crime or sports), and their view of the audience they want to reach. Thus, each paper maintains its own "social personality".⁴²

According to Hall, a news organization's sense of audience also affects how the organization codes information. Hall contends that each newspaper, seeking to communicate information in a way to which its audience will relate, develops its own "mode of address".

The language employed will thus be the *newspaper's own version of the language of the public to whom it is principally addressed: its version of the rhetoric, imagery and underlying common stock of knowledge which it assumes its audience shares and which thus forms the basis of the reciprocity of producer/reader* [original emphasis].⁴³

The newspaper, then, transforms the raw materials--the definitions of the powerful--into a language that has meaning for its audience. One may think that the newspaper, by actively coding the information, asserts its authority; it is not merely the puppet of the power brokers, repeating their words. Yet, Hall points out, the coding process actually facilitates the primary definers' ability to disseminate their worldview. Packaged in everyday language, their messages are easier for the audience to understand. Furthermore, when published, the messages are easier to accept. Hall states that, "the publicising of an issue in the media can give it more 'objective' status as a *real* (valid) issue of public concern

⁴²Hall, p. 60.

⁴³Hall, p. 61.

than would have been the case had it remained as merely a report made by experts and specialists [original emphasis]."⁴⁴

Of course, Hall concedes, the press is able to assert authority through editorials. Newspapers, adopting their characteristic modes of address (or "public idioms", as Hall calls them), express their opinions in two ways. They may speak for themselves, or they may speak for the public. "The essence of the difference...is that between the editorial which says 'We believe...' and that which says 'The public believes...'.⁴⁵ The latter approach is the more active one; the press is campaigning to shape public opinion. Both types of editorials, however, may support the status quo or push for change. The bureaucratic exigencies discussed above, though, affect the overall climate, so that editorials still tend to favor official action, Hall contends. In a final, ironic twist, officials often refer to these editorials to show that the public approves of their activities. After all, these editorials, speaking for a paper or the public, are believed to take an objective and disinterested perspective while expressing popular opinion.⁴⁶

Thus, bureaucracy influences the media to propagate the status quo. So does another factor, cultural concepts. Before discussing the intricacies of these concepts, I will provide a broad view of the culture that informs them. Hall, supported by other

⁴⁴Hall, p. 62.

Hall admits that the tendency to support the status quo, through selecting and coding, is tempered by certain factors, such as the story's "potential-for-translation (its newsworthiness)" and whether the story can be coded in terms of issues which concern the public (p. 62).

⁴⁵Hall, p. 63.

⁴⁶Hall, p. 63.

scholars, contends that people in any society--but especially in modern, capitalist ones--assume that they share the same worldview. Indeed, a group of citizens must have a common culture and perspective, or its society will disintegrate. However, Hall suggests that,

this basic cultural fact about society has been raised to an extreme ideological level. Because we occupy the same society and belong to roughly the same 'culture', it is assumed that there is, basically, only *one* perspective on events: that provided by what is called *the* culture, or (by some social scientists) *the* 'central value system'[original emphasis].⁴⁷

Therefore, a consensus exists as to how society should function. Its institutions, including the media, work within this framework. In fact, the media play a particularly important role, because their job is to identify new, unexpected or unusual events, and put them into a context so that people may try to understand why they happened. Thus, the media are forever examining breaches of the consensus. Perhaps the clearest breaches are those committed by criminals. These people violate a society's laws, which are supposed to protect the widely accepted moral order. Crime news points to the criminals, reminding people that their actions are considered wrong--even harmful to society. The news has another important function; it announces the criminals' punishments.

Crime, then, is 'news' because its treatment evokes threats to, but also reaffirms, the consensual morality of the society: a modern morality play takes place before us in which the 'devil' is both symbolically and physically cast out from the society by its guardians--the police and the judiciary.⁴⁸

This argument gains support from Ericson, Baranek and Chan. They postulate that

⁴⁷Hall, p. 55.

⁴⁸Hall, p. 66.

the media, in representing order, join the police and judiciary as control agents. By presenting morality plays, the media actively promote a justice system, which does more than punish individual deviants. The system also seeks to legitimate itself. The morality plays help by showing that justice may only be achieved through the proper functioning of authority. People see that the transgressor is cast out, authority is affirmed, and the moral order is preserved.⁴⁹ They are able to continue believing that they all belong to one culture, and share a single value system.

Katz, in trying to pinpoint why people have a constant appetite for crime news, disagrees that they turn to the news for affirmation of their collective consensus. News provides no such reassurance, he contends. Rather, articles about the justice system disconcert, because they tend to look at crimes in the stages before the criminal faces punishment. Consequently, readers are left on their own to judge the deviant act and the person accused of committing it. Katz says this situation provides readers with an opportunity for a daily moral workout. "Each day in myriad ways the metropolitan news reader must work out his [sic] position on dimensions of moral callousness, personal audacity and faith in collective enterprises, and these are the very matters which the news depicts criminals as testing."⁵⁰

According to Katz, readers consume news about audacious or vicious criminals, for example, because they want a ruler by which to measure their own competence and

⁴⁹Richard Ericson, Patricia Baranek and Janet Chan, Representing Order: Crime, Law and Justice in the News Media (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1991), pp. 343-4.

⁵⁰Katz, p. 71.

sensibilities. For instance, a bank robber who pulls off a daring heist may impress readers and show them how ingenious people (including the readers themselves) can be. If the bank robber is only a boy, readers may be further impressed and reassess the capabilities of their own sons. "If one's 10-year-old is seen as a potential bank robber, it might appear silly to insist that he go to bed at nine o'clock or eat his peas."⁵¹ We see that Katz views crime news as a means for people to assess moral boundaries and apply them to their personal lives. Hall and Ericson, Baranek and Chan regard crime news--through morality plays--as a means for people to see that their moral order is confirmed. Katz's position has merit because it allows for independent thought and action on the part of readers; they do not merely sit in the audience, applauding the play. However, individuals still believe that some form of a collective culture exists, and whether or not it is confirmed in crime news, it must inform people's assessments of their society's moral boundaries. With this broad view of culture established, we may consider the importance of cultural concepts.

Cultural concepts, often introduced into public consciousness and supported by society's dominant groups, affect the way the media frame stories. As "cultural givens", the concepts "are a part of culture--a given symbolic system, within which and in relation to which reporters and officials go about their duties."⁵² The concepts may encourage people to think in terms of categories that compartmentalize the way they think the world should work. When the public and reporters encounter a happening or situation that does not fit easily into an approved category, they use the deviation in a moral tale that

⁵¹Katz, pp. 50-1.

⁵²Schudson, p. 275.

reinforces the established cultural concepts.

Homosexuality is an anomaly in societies that take as fundamental the opposition and relationship of male and female; thus homosexuals provide a culturally charged topic for storytelling that seeks to preserve the conventional moral order of society--and its conceptual or symbolic foundation.³³

Schudson asserts that journalists likely rely on cultural concepts to tell them that an event may be of interest to their audience. In other words, these concepts help reporters determine news values, such as personification. People, rather than structures or social forces, may tend to appear in news stories because Western society values cultural idealism--each individual has a free will and is responsible for his or her own actions.³⁴ Cultural idealism, like patriarchy and responsible capitalism, provides the content of cultural concepts that make up the "'cultural air we breathe, the whole ideological atmosphere of our society.'"³⁵ This cultural air also has a form, Schudson notes, in the accepted traditions of storytelling, such as the use of narrative and human interest.

Before applying Schudson's writing to the coverage of crime, I will probe a little deeper into the concept of narrative. According to Ettema and Glasser, the narrative form is indispensable for journalists who want to provide a version of events, which people will view as real. The narrative, they say, can infuse a story with moral authority, which is necessary if the story is to have meaning in readers' lives. The authors quote White in asserting that the narrative form "'tells us what images to look for in our culturally

³³Schudson, p. 275.

³⁴Schudson, pp. 276-8.

³⁵Schudson, p. 278.

encoded experience in order to determine how we *should feel* about the thing represented" [original emphasis].³⁶ While journalists may deny that they are seeking to propound any particular moral view, Ettema and Glasser contend that the narrative form helps achieve moral tasks, such as the comprehension of innocence or guilt. Using techniques such as focusing on cruelly ironic details and giving preferential treatment to the victim's side of the story, reports may dramatize the victim's innocence. The goal is to make readers feel more than just sorry for the victim--they should feel morally outraged at the injustice the victim has suffered. To realize guilt, reports may use the technique of ritual denial. They identify the guilty party, and then ask the party to accept responsibility. The party denies it has done anything wrong. The goal here is to make readers see this denial as callous indifference.³⁷

With this perspective on how narrative forms may help shape our "cultural air", we may return to an analysis of Schudson's writing with respect to the coverage of crime. As mentioned earlier, Schudson contends that cultural concepts (such as cultural idealism) may help journalists determine news values (such as personification). This proposition

³⁶James S. Ettema and Theodore L. Glasser, "Narrative Form and Moral Force: The Realization of Innocence and Guilt Through Investigative Journalism," Journal of Communication vol. 38 (1988): p. 11.

³⁷Ettema and Glasser, pp. 12-21.

The authors' study focuses on investigative reports of guilty systems, rather than individuals, but I believe the findings have broader significance. First, the narrative form applies to more stories than just those which are investigative. Second, the form is not limited to stories about institutions. Indeed, the form tends to reduce stories to individual personalities, with an unfortunate consequence: details of systemic problems are lost, so that the stories summon people to deliberate upon moral actions of institutions, but do not provide adequate information for this deliberation (pp. 24-5).

may be tested against four news values that, according to Roshier, appear in crime news. The first news value is the seriousness of the offence--the more serious, the more newsworthy. Following Schudson's writing, journalists, confronted by various events and activities that violate the law, and consequently, the moral boundaries shaped by cultural concepts, may be attracted to the more serious offences. Certainly, these would appear to provide some of the best opportunities for moralizing upon deviant behaviour and how it wreaks havoc upon society. The second news value is whimsical circumstances, such as irony or unusualness. In turning to cultural concepts for indications of newsworthiness, journalists may note the forms that structure the culture and stories about it--the narrative form and human interest. Thus, events that present opportunities to use these forms may be considered newsworthy. As discussed earlier, journalists may highlight ironic details as a narrative technique, and focusing upon the unusual involves the storytelling tradition of human interest.

The third news value is sentimental or dramatic circumstances. Ettema and Glasser have pointed out the importance of drama in a narrative that seeks to make people consider their cultural codes, but these circumstances also have relevance because of the specific cultural concept of cultural idealism. This concept--of free will and individual responsibility--leads journalists to perceive personification as a news value. Since sentimental or dramatic circumstances may bolster personification, they, too, may be seen as newsworthy. They encourage the audience to feel pity or outrage for an individual, either the victim or offender. In this attempt to arouse the audience's base emotions, sensationalism may work with whimsical circumstances to create a very newsworthy story.

"In fact, anything which has entertainment value and contains human interest in the widest sense (appealing to the nobler as well as the base human emotions) makes crime newsworthy."⁵⁸ Finally, crime news gains value if a famous person is somehow involved. The celebrity does not have to be the offender or the victim, although such a scenario is preferable.⁵⁹ This factor may result from a culture that places greater value on famous people (who usually belong to the elite) rather than on the "little people", but it may actually work against the status quo. Certainly, power brokers do not want the masses to know when they have been accused or convicted of criminal activities.

Perhaps society's ruling groups did not introduce the cultural concept which led to the news value of elite people. While the ruling groups may wish to control culture, other groups may still proffer ideas, such as responsible capitalism. This concept may have been initiated by social groups, such as clerks, small merchants and artisans, which emerged with the development of industrialization and urbanization in the nineteenth century. According to Papke, these new groups resented attempts by the elite members of society to use their old or large wealth to avoid the law (by bribing police, for example). The penny press, another development of that era, catered to the emerging groups. The press propagated the cultural concept of responsible capitalism, focusing upon and criticizing elite criminals.⁶⁰ Thus, cultural concepts may influence the final media product, but not

⁵⁸Roshier, p. 35.

⁵⁹Roshier, p. 35.

⁶⁰David Ray Papke, Framing the Criminal: Crime, Cultural Work and the Loss of Critical Perspective, 1830-1900 (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1987), pp. 2, 43, 48.

necessarily in favor of society's rulers.

From this evaluation of Roshier's news values, we see that individuals who commit the most serious, unusual crimes, and, preferably, are famous, will tend to be selected to appear in crime news. The fact that reporters focus on these factors, and wish to fit everything into categories, results in stereotyping. For example, patriarchy, traditionally supported by dominant Western institutions, is part of our cultural air; in the past, men have had little reason to consider the view that attacks upon women may stem from misogyny, a complex problem that may be blamed upon society, not individuals. Instead, myths abound that men rape because lust drives them beyond self-control; otherwise, rapists must be crazy sex fiends. Women tempt their assailants by dressing provocatively. In fact, they deserve to be raped when they walk alone on the streets at night--they should not have acted so carelessly. Any decent woman would not travel unescorted; therefore, only "loose" women are raped.⁶¹

As part of the American culture (and, one may contend, the Canadian culture), these myths receive support from a gender-biased language, says Benedict. She points out that the English language has more words for men than for women. As well, there are more positive words for men and more words with sexual overtones for women. The press, relying on this language, tends to describe female crime victims in a much different way than male victims. "Men are never described as hysterical, bubbly, pretty, pert, prudish, vivacious, or flirtatious, yet these are all words used to describe the female

⁶¹Helen Benedict, Virgin or Vamp: How the Press Covers Sex Crime (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 14-7.

victims...Imagine, 'Vivacious John Harris was attacked in his home yesterday.'"⁶²

The media portrayal of women in general also leaves much to be desired, says Benedict. A 1980 study found that women, representing fifty-two per cent of the American population, made up only seven per cent of "newsmakers" quoted in a sample of newspapers. By 1989, this percentage had increased to only eleven per cent. The few women who managed to garner attention found themselves described in terms of what they were wearing, not what they were doing as world leaders or prosperous professionals. In general, the media showed the female sex as women at home (virgins) or sex objects (whores).⁶³ Benedict concludes that journalists, operating in a world that defines women in general--and rape victims in particular--as either virgins or vamps, are forced to propagate these two stereotypes.

If a reporter publishes less-than-flattering details of a rape victim, then those details are immediately used against her. If a reporter chooses to suppress those details in order to protect the victim from being persecuted by them, then the reporter is buying into the virgin image and committing biased journalism at the same time.⁶⁴

The stereotyping does not stop at rape victims and rapists. Papke discusses how the American media have framed criminals. Early American crime news, in the form of factually questionable street pamphlets and broadsheets, involved three types of offenders: the rogue, the fiend, or a combination of both. In the years leading up to modernization, writers used the word "rogue" to portray tricksters or fraud artists, sitting near the

⁶²Benedict, p. 20.

⁶³Benedict, pp. 21-2.

⁶⁴Benedict, p. 24.

gallows and regretting their thieving schemes. In recounting these crimes, however, writers made the exploits seem exciting--perhaps almost rewarding.⁶⁶ This portrayal occurred during a time when the social order was fairly stable; the masses held to a culture based upon government by a traditional elite and support from the community. Urbanization and industrialization were just starting to gain momentum in the 1830s.⁶⁶

Enmeshed in tinier struggles against the same laws, constabulary, and well-to-do citizens that the rogues topped, readers looked for and found in the pamphlets soothing victories over the same foes who made difficult their own daily lives. More generally, readers of the rogue pamphlets found in them valorizations of self-reliant individualism. In an era in which an ethos of individualism was emerging and even stabilizing, reading about an individualistic rogue was an especially pleasant experience.⁶⁷

Meanwhile, fiends committed crimes against people. These criminals were crazy, violent and evil. (Papke points out that this stereotype exists in American society today) Often, fiends were also members of the ruling class, and their exploits included illicit affairs with married members of the opposite sex. According to Papke, such exploits served as a type of pornography that titillated readers, who also were particularly delighted by the crimes and punishments of the elite. Violence followed sex, however, so that each tale ended with a moral about the evilness of the crime.⁶⁸ This type of tale, with the criminal as fiend, helped citizens, whose culture was based on concepts of traditional

⁶⁶Papke, pp. 26-7.

⁶⁶Papke, p. 2.

⁶⁷Papke, p. 27.

⁶⁸Papke, pp. 28-9.

government and an agrarian way of life, deal with a changing societal structure. "In the growing cities where factories belched smoke into the air and residents fretted over apparently anomic conditions, reports on murderous fiends served as reference points in the search for new social norms."⁶⁹

In the 1830s and 1840s, the penny press emerged, serving the new social classes. This press (and a weekly publication called the National Police Gazette) propagated the worldview that the traditional elite abused its position of power, using its wealth to avoid the law. Elite criminals were framed as and explicitly called felons, "mean, willful predators who harmed and exploited industrious workers and merchants."⁷⁰ The focus was on the usurpation of property, but news publications also included accounts of the well-to-do who committed violent crimes against the lower classes.⁷¹ Condemning the elite's wrongdoings and abuse of power, reporters and editors accepted and disseminated the cultural concept of responsible capitalism.

This politically charged frame disappeared after the American Civil War, however, as newspapers became highly organized bureaucracies. They began turning away from courts, toward the police, for a steady flow of news. "In the courts, after all, days could go by full of absences, continuances and mundane developments."⁷² This shift affected the final media product, since reporters who cover courts may have some sympathy for the

⁶⁹Papke, p. 31.

⁷⁰Papke, p. 49.

⁷¹Papke, pp. 49-50.

⁷²Papke, p. 60.

accused, who is supposed to be presumed innocent until proven guilty. The police, however, cast events in terms of the need to maintain social order. (Of course, reporters still covered the courts. However, an increasing emphasis on objectivity probably led reporters to seek out court officials for comments. The influence of bureaucracy emerges here, as bureaucratic sources--police and court officials--spread their worldviews.) Reporters and editors also came to rely on genres to provide safe ways of recounting new, threatening social developments. For example, the war news genre was used to describe a violent railway strike that spread through several states.

The form of the news articles resembled closely that of Civil War dispatches. As during the Civil War, daily coverage consisted of two, three, even a half dozen dispatches from different locations, printed one after another without being coordinated into one report. At the end of a string of dispatches, unadorned lists of the dead and wounded appeared, much as they had after dispatches concerning Civil War battles.⁷³

The two types of press operating in the United States after the Civil War adopted new ways of framing crime news. The bourgeois press turned to information, aiming to educate its middle- and upper-class readers. Meanwhile, the popular press aimed to entertain the masses; stories were framed in terms of the sensational or the melodramatic crime against a person.

By selecting out for emphasis personal violence crimes, this journalism gave misleading impressions regarding the variety of crime in the urban environment; by accentuating a crime's most shocking elements, it reduced the social complexity of crime-related situations; and by melodramatically casting victims, criminals and criminal pursuers in white and black, it ignored the more profound social and political aspects of crime.⁷⁴

⁷³Papke, p. 63.

⁷⁴Papke, p. 70.

According to Papke, American newspapers today continue the framing traditions of the bourgeois and mass presses. Roshier's list of news values indicates that British newspapers certainly construct crime stories like the ones the American mass press has framed during the last century. One may posit that members of the public, including reporters, breathe a cultural air generally suffused with concepts of the ruling groups. These concepts encourage reporters to frame their stories in sensationalist, melodramatic manners, so that the press keeps the public content with the status quo.

In conclusion, sociologists, criminologists and other scholars agree that journalists do not simply reflect reality. Instead, they construct particular versions of reality, and certain factors influence them in this construction. Some writers hold to the Mass Manipulative model, under which reporters actively work to support the status quo. The media's business side may influence reporters to act in this way, as publishers and members of boards of directors require that reporters write articles that promote the media's capitalist interests. Yet direct connections between owners and journalists are difficult to prove, so that more moderate academic writers assert that, "Ownership of the means of transmitting news does not imply control of the criteria of the selection of news."⁷⁵

Some analysts consider how reporters' personal biases may affect the final media product. These analysts posit that respected journalists, who have liberal tendencies, consequently write news articles that either implicitly or explicitly challenge the status quo. Obviously, these analysts do not advance the starkest version of the Mass Manipulative model, but they do not support the most extreme view of the Commercial

⁷⁵Cohen and Young, p. 17.

Laissez-Faire model either, since the latter model dictates that journalists are passive participants in the production of news. Upon examining stories written by supposedly liberal reporters, however, one may find that the articles actually lean to the right. The reporters may recognize their biases and, in attempting to be objective, overcompensate in their writing so that their articles have conservative slants. Consequently, journalists' left-wing biases may actually support the status quo. This argument, however, requires conjecture about the content of journalists' mental biases and how they may be translated into news stories.

A more provable influence is that of bureaucracy. It is a dual influence; the news organization has certain bureaucratic exigencies it needs to meet, and finds that other bureaucracies can help it do so. As a result, news organizations become part of bureaucratic society, propagating the worldview of the powerful. Finally, cultural concepts may influence news, in that reporters, as members of the public, live in a culture based on concepts such as individualism. Society's powerful groups try to control these cultural concepts, so that journalists construct stories based on popular stereotypes. Like bureaucracy, this influence appears logical. People's culture, based on values, should influence the way people think and write. Also like bureaucracy, cultural concepts do not present an overly simplistic conspiracy theory that questions, but probably cannot prove, the motives of media owners and journalists.

Chapter Two

During Bernardo's trial, the newspapers published hundreds of articles. Indeed, by the time his ex-wife, Karla Homolka, left the witness stand, the Star's three trial reporters had produced 105,825 words of copy. In terms of column inches (measuring each column's number of inches), the copy added up to 220 feet, or about the height of the newspaper's office tower in downtown Toronto. Rosie DiManno, the Star's columnist for most of the trial, had produced 90 feet, or the distance between bases on a ball diamond.⁷⁶ Before I begin analyzing those articles, along with those of the Globe and Sun, I will provide a broad description, in this chapter, of how the trial unfolded in the newspapers. In doing so, however, I must acknowledge that the media's interest in Bernardo began long before he came to trial for the abductions, rapes and murders of Leslie Mahaffy and Kristen French. Bernardo gained attention--albeit anonymously--when several police forces in Southern Ontario set up a special task force to find French's killer. (Of course, Mahaffy was killed 10 months before French, but for reasons explored later, her murder received relatively little attention until French disappeared.) Thus, the media identified the police investigation as newsworthy.

Alan Cairns, a Sun reporter who was assigned to cover French's abduction in April, 1992, and continued covering the story until the end of Bernardo's trial more than three years later, listed, in an interview, the reasons why he believes the case earned so much

⁷⁶Rosie DiManno, "Break is a welcome respite from relentless testimony," Toronto Star 19 July 1995: p. A8.

publicity. He did not analyze events in terms of specific news values, but his itemized list involves aspects of sensationalism, irony and unusualness. It also involves news values that a television station's news workers in Austin, Texas, started espousing in January 1996. I mention these news values because they did not appear in the review of the academic literature, but are significant because they mesh with Cairns's list. The KVUE staff in Austin was trying to change the way it covered crime news. Instead of simply reporting "mayhem", the staff assessed each crime to see whether it would be acting responsibly in reporting it.

Now, before a crime story makes it on the air on KVUE, it must meet one or more of five criteria:

- 1) Does action need to be taken?
- 2) Is there an immediate threat to safety?
- 3) Is there a threat to children?
- 4) Does the crime have significant community impact?
- 5) Does the story lend itself to a crime prevention effort?⁷⁷

Cairns started his list with the element of sensationalism; he noted the gruesome way in which Mahaffy's killers disposed of her body. The teenager's corpse was dismembered, encased in concrete blocks and dumped in a lake. The list continued with French's abduction. Recalled Cairns, "Then you have Kristen, right off the middle of the street, in her school uniform, broad daylight. I mean, she has to go to school. It's not like she was

⁷⁷Joe Holley, "Should the coverage fit the crime?: A Texas TV station tries to resist the allure of mayhem," Columbia Journalism Review May/June 1996: p. 28.

Following their list, KVUE news workers decided against covering a triple murder. Drugs and alcohol had fueled an argument among three Mexican men, and they shot each other. The news workers decided there was no threat to safety or to children, no impact on the community, and no action or crime prevention necessary.

out at 11 or 12 or 1 o'clock, accepting rides."⁷⁸ The two deaths compounded into the threat of a serial killer. Meanwhile, other young women in Southern Ontario were missing or dead, apparently at the hands of strangers. Then came the campaign to find the Camaro. A few witnesses told police that they believed French's kidnappers drove a cream-colored Camaro; the police responded by asking anyone who owned such a car to bring it in for inspection. Police also took part in a special ninety-minute television program, which included an FBI profile of two male killers. Cairns recalled that the story "was larger than life, even back then."

Then Bernardo was arrested. "And, wow, wouldn't you know it, he's the Scarborough rapist, too." (In fact, one police force charged Bernardo with a number of rapes in Scarborough, a suburb of Toronto, the day after arresting him. Meanwhile, the task force investigating the Mahaffy and French murders waited three months to charge Bernardo--until Homolka had agreed to testify against him.) Cairns noted that the Scarborough rapist had garnered much attention, and the public interest was immense. Police investigating the rapes received thousands of tips while the rapist was at large for at least five years.

Next came Homolka; it was revealed that the wife had participated in the crimes involving Mahaffy and French. Details of her trial remained a secret, protected by a publication ban, until Bernardo's trial. "So it builds and builds and builds. And Current Affair breaks the ban. The Washington Post breaks the ban. We're supposed to protect our culture from the Americans, and they just took it away from us like that," Cairns said,

⁷⁸Alan Cairns, personal interview, 8 Aug. 1995.

snapping his fingers. He continued with his list, mentioning the unusualness of the attorney-general ordering a direct indictment, so that Bernardo never had a preliminary hearing. Instead, he went straight to trial. Then, Bernardo was charged in the death of Homolka's youngest sister, Tammy, and Bernardo's lawyer, Ken Murray, quit the case as he handed over crucial evidence--the videotapes. These tapes, made by Bernardo and Homolka, show, among other scenes, the husband and wife confining and sexually assaulting Mahaffy and French. Police had failed to find the tapes during a three-month search of the couple's house, so the Crown had decided to enter into a plea bargain with Homolka, to ensure her testimony against Bernardo. (The deal raised public ire even before its details were revealed, as Homolka received a sentence of 12 years for her role in the killings, and would be eligible for day parole in January 1997, and full parole in July 1997.) Cairns's list shows how the overall story was extremely newsworthy before Bernardo even came to trial.

That trial began on May 18, 1995. (In fact, jury selection began a couple of weeks earlier, but my analysis of coverage begins with the first day all court players--the judge, jury, prosecutors and defence lawyers--gathered to examine Bernardo's guilt or innocence.) On May 18, the Crown addressed the jury, revealing details of Homolka's role in the crimes. For the first time, the public learned the specifics of how Bernardo and Homolka drugged and raped her sister, Tammy, recording the event on videotape. (Tammy choked on her vomit shortly afterward, and died.) The public also learned Homolka would testify that Bernardo used the tape to blackmail her into helping him sexually assault Mahaffy and French. The media did not paint Homolka as a particularly

sympathetic character at that point. Her image, as either victim or villain, remained to be determined. For instance, the Globe noted that in his opening address, the lead prosecutor, Ray Houlahan, "readily conceded" that Homolka was an accomplice to the crimes, but that she was compelled by Bernardo's threat that he would disclose the tape of Tammy's assault.⁷⁹ Meanwhile, the article did not look to describe Bernardo as anything other than a criminal. Indeed, the article began,

The Paul Bernardo murder trial opened yesterday with a chilling portrayal of the 30-year-old bookkeeper as a *monster* obsessed with sex and exerting power over his victims, frequently using blackmail, beatings and weapons to enforce his will [my emphasis].⁸⁰

The article included no refutation of this depiction. It may be noted that Bernardo's defence team (led by lawyer John Rosen) did not give an opening address, which could have attacked this picture of Bernardo the monster

In the following days, Houlahan trotted out an assortment of witnesses, who provided a foundation of facts that set the scenes of where the teenagers were abducted, and where their bodies were discovered. (Throughout the trial coverage, all three newspapers frequently referred to the teens as "schoolgirls") Newspapers often portrayed testimony from witnesses, such as police officers, as clinical, but offset this with the emotion shown by the victims' families in the courtroom. Such emotion was placed high in the stories. The first quotation to follow appeared as the second paragraph in a Globe

⁷⁹Kirk Makin, "Bernardo portrayed as monster. Homolka made plea bargain before police knew about videotapes, Crown says," Globe and Mail [Toronto] 19 May 1995 p A1.

⁸⁰Makin, "Bernardo portrayed as monster," p. A1

article, the second quotation appeared as the lede in a Star story published a few days later

The parents of Leslie Mahaffy, 14, and Kristen French, 15, watched in obvious misery as a police crime-scene draftsman [sic] used detailed maps, charts and aerial photographs to zero in on the neighbourhoods where the teen-agers lived and died ⁸¹

The parents of slain schoolgirl Leslie Mahaffy bowed their heads and shut their eyes as a graphic video showing severed body parts of their daughter was played in court yesterday ⁸²

Some of the witnesses were friends of Mahaffy or French, and their testimony provided information about the teens' last movements before they disappeared. This factual testimony was anything but clinical, though, as the witnesses knew the girls before they became simply corpses to be identified. When these witnesses took the stand, the newspapers focused on their poignant, sometimes emotional, stories. For example, on May 24, the papers all led with testimony provided by Amanda Carpino, a friend of Mahaffy. While seemingly presenting "just the facts," reporters led with part of Carpino's testimony, which was laden with tragedy.

After missing a curfew imposed by her parents, Leslie Mahaffy arrived home to find her house in darkness and the doors locked, the Paul Bernardo murder trial was told yesterday.

The 14-year-old Burlington girl, whom Mr. Bernardo is accused of abducting, raping and killing, walked to a pay phone at a nearby convenience store and unsuccessfully implored her best friend to arrange to have the girl's mother come to pick her up, court was told...

⁸¹Kirk Makin, "Abductions of schoolgirls retraced at Bernardo trial: Judge comments on Crown's opening address," Globe and Mail [Toronto] 20 May 1995: p. A4.

⁸²John Duncanson and Nick Pron, "Bernardo witness tells of grisly find," Toronto Star 25 May 1995: p. A1.

Leslie's family and friends would never see her alive again."¹³

A confused and anxious Leslie Mahaffy, locked out of her own home, called her best friend for help on the night she vanished from Burlington, a court has been told.

Amanda Carpino was the last person Mahaffy spoke to before she disappeared in the early hours of June 15, 1991. Mahaffy asked to stay at Carpino's house for the night, but her friend reluctantly said no."¹⁴

An anxious and penniless Leslie Mahaffy asked her best friend for a place to sleep in a 2 a.m. phone call just prior to her backyard abduction, court heard yesterday.

Finding herself locked out of her parents' Burlington home June 15, 1991 after breaking an 11 p.m. curfew, Mahaffy called Amanda Carpino from a telephone booth asking if she could stay the night."¹⁵

It would be false to contend that the various reporters always led with the same, tug-at-the-heart-strings information. Indeed, choosing the same focus would have been very difficult on the days when numerous witnesses took the stand. However, even on those days, the reporters recognized certain evidence as newsworthy, if only for its emotional aspect. Articles published on May 26 provide a good example. The day before, nine witnesses had testified, including French's mother, Donna. On May 26, the Globe focused on a witness who said she had seen "someone struggling to load what looked like a parcel into a car. Unknown to the middle-aged woman, the 'parcel' was Kristen French. Joan

¹³Kirk Makin, "Mahaffy found house locked, court told. Bernardo trial hears how friend refused to arrange for pickup of 14-year-old who broke curfew," Globe and Mail [Toronto] 24 May 1995: p. A1.

¹⁴Nick Pron and John Duncanson, "Tracing Mahaffy's last steps. Bernardo trial hears of 2 a.m. call to friend," Toronto Star 24 May 1995: p. A1.

¹⁵Alan Cairns and Scott Burnside, "Leslie locked out on night of kidnap. She called girlfriend looking for place to stay," Toronto Sun 24 May 1995: p. 4.

Packham had apparently become the only witness to one of the most notorious abductions in Canadian history."⁸⁶ Donna French had little information to contribute about that fateful day, but reporter Kirk Makin found room halfway through the story to note that, "the most dramatic moment [came] when Kristen's mother, Donna French, walked to the witness box."⁸⁷ He did not describe the woman's emotional state, but included her testimony that she and her husband began to worry when their daughter, "always punctual and considerate," was late coming home from school.⁸⁸

The Star chose a different focus for its front-page article on May 26. It led with the fact that police initially believed Tammy Homolka's death was suspicious because she had red marks on her face. But only a few paragraphs later, the article briefly outlined the day's evidence, including, "Emotional testimony from French's mother, Donna, whose eyes reddened when she was asked to identify her daughter's shoe, found later at the scene of the alleged abduction."⁸⁹

The Sun made the most of Donna's personal story. On its front page, a drawing of Donna in the witness stand was placed underneath this headline: "Kristen: Family's 'Social Butterfly'." The accompanying story began, "A composed Donna French fought

⁸⁶Kirk Makin, "Woman saw struggle in church lot: TV story on teen's disappearance made Bernardo witness realize incident's significance," Globe and Mail [Toronto] 26 May 1995: p. A6.

⁸⁷Makin, "Woman saw struggle in church lot."

⁸⁸Makin, "Woman saw struggle in church lot."

⁸⁹John Duncanson and Nick Pron, "Bernardo: How Tammy Lyn died," Toronto Star 26 May 1995: p. A1.

off tears yesterday as she described her slain daughter Kristen's vibrant social life, her affection for boyfriend Elton and her love of her dog, Sasha."⁹⁰ Thus, all three papers, to varying degrees, mentioned Donna's dramatic or emotional testimony, even though it provided little information about her daughter's abduction. Furthermore, when the victims' families took a larger role in the trial process, fighting to keep the public from hearing the soundtracks of the videotapes, news coverage continued to focus on emotion.

The Star began its story as follows:

The mother of slain schoolgirl Leslie Mahaffy says she is "barely hanging on to life" after hearing her daughter's agony and cries on explicit videotapes at the Paul Bernardo murder trial.

"I have no idea whether I will be able to survive hearing these tapes again," Debbie Mahaffy says in an emotional affidavit filed with the Supreme Court of Canada.

"As before, I will not abandon her."⁹¹

Meanwhile, newspapers were publishing columns. While some commentators wrote about the trial only once or sporadically, the Star and the Sun decided to try something new; they stationed two columnists in Courtroom 6-1, to produce daily stories. The columnists provided color, describing events recorded on videotape and reactions of people in court. They also provided commentary, analyzing, for instance, the role of the victims' families in court, the role of the videotapes, and the judge's decision to let the public (including the media) hear, but not see, the tapes. Their commentary extended to Bernardo and Homolka, even though their access to the couple was extremely limited

⁹⁰Scott Burnside and Alan Cairns, "A mother's anguish: Donna French recalls vibrant daughter," Toronto Sun 26 May 1995: p. 5.

⁹¹Stephen Bindman, "Bernardo trial families want tapes silenced," Toronto Star 11 June 1995: p. A7.

The columnists had to rely on videotapes and Bernardo's demeanor in court. A tape showing Homolka pretending to be her dead sister, Tammy, while having sex with Bernardo, for example, led the Star's Rosie DiManno to comment upon the fact that Bernardo needed to "erase" Homolka's face in order to orgasm. Meanwhile, DiManno noted, Homolka was under no duress; she participated voluntarily, even initiating sex acts. DiManno's column showed the couple's sexual relationship to be tedious and impersonal.⁹² The Sun's Christie Blatchford shared DiManno's view, calling the partners "deeply shallow, emotional eunuchs."⁹³ Even before Homolka took the stand, Blatchford had decided Bernardo's wife was part of "a scary pair. It is not merely their combined violence which is so frightening, but the saccharin spin they put on it and the vast emotional distance between them and their grotesque acts."⁹⁴ Still, the columnist admitted that she had a better picture of the male half of the dangerous team, since she could watch how he behaved in court. She looked forward to the time when Homolka would take the stand. Then, she wrote, the gloves would be off.⁹⁵ This comment foreshadowed a match, pitting Homolka against Bernardo's defence lawyers, but also against journalists.

The battle was over credibility, as summed up by the Globe's headline on June 19, the day Homolka began telling her story: "Testimony will finally reveal the real Karla

⁹²Rosie DiManno, "So tedious, these tapes, played not once, but twice," Toronto Star 2 June 1995: p. A8.

⁹³Christie Blatchford, "The gag's off Monday," Toronto Sun 16 June 1995: p. 5.

⁹⁴Christie Blatchford, "Sergeant saves his humanity," Toronto Sun 8 June 1995: p. 5.

⁹⁵Blatchford, "The gag's off Monday."

Homolka." The subheadline read: "FACES/ She's been called a princess, victim, slut and devil. Which face wins on the stand will decide the outcome of the Bernardo trial " As the Crown's star witness, Homolka recounted her life with Bernardo from the moment she met him, and how he became an abusive mate, forcing her to help him commit his crimes. In the newspapers, the image of a battered wife, deserving of sympathy, was predominant. The Globe headline on June 20 read, "Homolka describes Bernardo beatings: Five-year sex slave to 'magnetic' man." Makin tempered Homolka's role as Bernardo's supposed "sexual plaything" and "punching bag" by adding that she was also a partner in crime, and had exhibited her independence many times during her relationship with Bernardo.⁹⁶

That day, the Star also presented Homolka's version of events, with a banner headline on the front page announcing, "Homolka tells of killings." (As it typically did during the trial, the Star articles also provided every little detail revealed in court. For example, a handful of Polaroid pictures showing Homolka naked, or having sex with Bernardo, was entered into evidence. The Star described the different poses in a number of the photographs.)⁹⁷ The Sun took the Star's headline one step further. On its front page, the Sun headline quoted Homolka: "'Paul Strangled Them...I Was In The Same Room Watching.'" In recounting her testimony, the Sun reporters included phrases such as the observation that Homolka spoke "in a quiet, girlish voice," while Bernardo was

⁹⁶Kirk Makin, "Homolka describes Bernardo beatings: Five-year sex slave to 'magnetic' man," Globe and Mail [Toronto] 20 June 1995, pp. A1, A4.

⁹⁷Nick Pron, John Duncanson and Jim Rankin, "Homolka tells of killings. She locks eyes with ex-husband Bernardo for the first time in 2 1/2 years," Toronto Star 20 June 1995: p. A8.

"seemingly nonchalant."⁹⁸ During the next two weeks, Houlahan continued to question Homolka and reporters continued to privilege her perspective, although this did not always mean she was described as a victim. After all, she was a convicted killer, and during her testimony, she admitted she played a key role in the crimes. However, some articles softened her confessions by including her excuses. Thus, headlines such as the following appeared:

Homolka: Why I Helped Bernardo Drug, Rape My Sister: 'Stupidly, I Still Loved Him'⁹⁹

Homolka ignored Mahaffy's pleas: 'I was too afraid of Paul,' she says¹⁰⁰

When lawyer John Rosen began his week-long cross-examination, his accusations--suggesting that Homolka was often the primary figure in the crimes--tended to appear in headlines and ledes. Homolka's rebuttals were never far behind, in subheadlines and the first few paragraphs of stories. The lawyer and witness were often depicted as jousting. In an explicit example, the Globe's Makin wrote, "Going into the fifth day of spirited cross-examination, the chief adversaries in the Paul Bernardo trial have settled into a strangely comfortable relationship highlighted by both combativeness and a seeming respect."¹⁰¹ In this article, Makin took on the role of analyst, assessing Rosen and

⁹⁸Scott Burnside and Alan Cairns, "'Paul strangled them': Homolka," Toronto Sun 20 June 1995: p. 4.

⁹⁹Toronto Sun, 21 June 1995: p. 1.
The first line was what is known as a "kicker"; it preceded the main headline.

¹⁰⁰Toronto Star 23 June 1995: p. A1.

¹⁰¹Kirk Makin, "Beauty and the barrister showcased in trial," Globe and Mail [Toronto] 10 July 1995: p. A6.

Homolka's relationship. He also provided color, describing Homolka's figure and clothing. "The overall effect is a fascinating picture of teen-aged sophistication, for Ms Homolka looks younger than her 25 years."¹⁰² While the Globe lacked a full-time columnist at the trial, Makin made sure readers did not lack for commentary. He often added tidbits of analysis and color to his news coverage.

Meanwhile, the female columnists attacked Homolka. They stated that she was not the passive, meek person she pretended to be when answering Houlahan's questions. Rather, her true, feisty self emerged when confronted by Rosen. She was willful and, the columnists contended, could have stood up to Bernardo. Even if Homolka truly suffered tremendous physical, psychological and sexual abuse at the hands of Bernardo, she could never rationalize the fact that she had helped him rape Tammy.

At the precipice, before she began the slide into servitude and diminished capacity and debasement, before she was beaten, she had given Paul Bernardo her kid sister for Christmas...Karla Homolka looked into the dark warm mouth of the valley, saw something there she liked--and jumped.¹⁰³

Blatchford recognized that she and others were tending to focus on Homolka's role in the crimes, not Bernardo's. In a column, she gave two reasons for this fascination with the female killer. First, Homolka did not explain, to Blatchford's satisfaction, how she could let her then-fiance violate her sister. "There was no sense of this ever having been a moral dilemma for her, rather a logistical one."¹⁰⁴ Second, Bernardo and Homolka were

¹⁰²Makin, "Beauty and the barrister showcased in trial "

¹⁰³Christie Blatchford, "She leaped into abyss," Toronto Sun 29 June 1995 p 5

¹⁰⁴Christie Blatchford, "A Princess uncharming," Toronto Sun 21 June 1995 p 5

partners, but while he was facing charges that could keep him locked up for life, she would be living outside the prison walls in a few short years. Justice had not been served.¹⁰⁵ Many letter writers agreed with Blatchford, saying they did not believe that Homolka was a victim, or that her punishment fit her crimes.

Meanwhile, other readers sent in letters debating whether Homolka should be allowed to take university courses while in prison. Some said a convicted criminal does not deserve the privilege of pursuing an education, especially if the taxpayers have to pay for it. Others countered that prison is meant for rehabilitation as well as retribution. Furthermore, Homolka, as a correspondence student, presented no threat to people on campus. At least one reader, however, was tired of hearing about Homolka.

I am a little concerned with Christie Blatchford's coverage of the Bernardo trial. With all of her articles focusing on Karla Homolka, I'm afraid the entire trial will pass by and virtually nothing will actually have been written about Paul Bernardo himself. To me, he is the primary figure not Karla, and her role has been dissection [sic] and analyzed with microscopic detail.¹⁰⁶

The Sun replied that the reader should be patient. Homolka was stepping off the stand, and although Rosen had only dropped hints, promising nothing, people anticipated that Bernardo would testify in his own defence. First, however, the Crown had to finish presenting its case. Houlahan questioned experts, ranging from a specialist on hair analysis, to a man who had spent most of his life selling and servicing power tools. Blatchford commented on the dry testimony, criticizing the Crown for wasting the court's

¹⁰⁵Blatchford, "A Princess uncharming."

¹⁰⁶S. Grant, letter to editor, Toronto Sun 17 July 1995: p. 10 (Comment).

time and money. She noted that Bernardo's defence team had already conceded many of the facts Houlahan was trying to prove. Videotapes had proven the rest.¹⁰⁷ DiManno's column on July 18 pointed out that one might have expected the victims' families to find the dry, scientific testimony a welcome break from the horror of the videotapes. That was not the case. "Not when the entomologist under oath is talking about the life span of a blowfly precisely because the larvae's development on the corpse--*your* child's mouth, nose, eyes--was studied to determine Kristen French's time of death [original emphasis]."¹⁰⁸

The break came a couple of days later, when the jury began a 10-day vacation. Newspapers announced the hiatus; in fact, the Globe acted precipitously by publishing a cartoon before the break began. The sketch on the front page showed a man in a printed shirt and ball cap, leaning back in a chair with his hands behind his head and a drink at his side. The caption declared, "Aaaah, holidays! No fax, no phone. No Bernardo trial details!"¹⁰⁹ The commentary continued, however, as papers published more letters debating Homolka's university education. (The Globe, in particular, gave considerable space to these letters. It also published an editorial in favor of allowing Homolka to take courses. "It serves no one to deny her the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills

¹⁰⁷Christie Blatchford, "A yawning stupor falls over trial," Toronto Sun 18 July 1995 p. 5.

¹⁰⁸Rosie DiManno, "In arid testimony, no respite from horror," Toronto Star 18 July 1995: p. A8.

¹⁰⁹Cartoon, Globe and Mail [Toronto] 18 July 1995: p. A1.

that might help her become a productive, functioning member of society."¹¹⁰) Other letters included commendation of journalists' work, and criticism of a newspaper's decision to censor language that was used during testimony. Specifically, the letter writer felt that if she could handle reading the horrific details of the rapes and murders, she could handle reading the word "f---" spelled out in full.¹¹¹

After the break, a few more witnesses testified for the Crown. They included an ex-girlfriend of Bernardo, who stated that he had once raped her while wrapping twine around her neck. The story was similar to one told by Homolka--she had said that just before she left Bernardo, he had used a ligature while sexually assaulting her. Homolka had also stated that, throughout their relationship, she had submitted to sex acts that hurt or disgusted her. The day after the ex-girlfriend testified, the news articles focused on her accusation of rape, but both DiManno and Blatchford seized on the question of why at least two women would let Bernardo assault them and then come back for more.

Blatchford wrote of Bernardo:

He is, if not an open book, certainly easy to understand, for who among us does not sense the intoxication there must be in the kind of power he seems to have had?

It's the girls in this trial who are the enigma, those born long after the sexual revolution and into a climate of empowerment so circumscribed it is sometimes legislated by government, but who will have none of it.¹¹²

¹¹⁰Editorial, "Karla Homolka, student," Globe and Mail [Toronto] 20 July 1995: p. A18.

¹¹¹Jacky Sweetnam, letter to editor, "Four-letter anachronism," Toronto Star 22 July 1995: p. B3.

¹¹²Christie Blatchford, "Women in this trial are an enigma," Toronto Sun 1 Aug. 1995: p. 5.

Even more puzzling, Blatchford noted, was that she knew other women--older and less impressionable than Bernardo's former lovers--who also endured sex acts that they did not like, for the sake of pleasing their mates.

During the next few days, Blatchford continued analyzing the witnesses, who included Homolka's co-workers and two teenaged girls she helped Bernardo try to seduce. Blatchford explored who, exactly, was a victim. Meanwhile, DiManno's daily column disappeared, without explanation. Reporters were still busy producing news article after news article. Some stories used blatant sensationalism. The Star previews stories on page A2, and on Aug. 3, placed the following preview at the top of its list. The headline read, "Girl describes Bernardo pot party." This sentence followed: "A girl Paul Bernardo was trying to seduce two years ago when she was 17 tells a court he looked 'almost scary' when they smoked marijuana with Karla Homolka." Other articles had an educational bent. They included, for instance, expert testimony regarding the concepts of DNA analysis and battered-wife syndrome.

As the Crown neared the end of its case, reporters and columnists began to write about the possibility of Rosen calling Bernardo to the stand. Makin at the Globe commented that the accused had remained an enigma up to that point. "The horrifying acts of rape and terror shown to the jury appeared at stunning variance with the animated face and ready smile on display in the prisoner's box."¹¹³ In contrast, Blatchford felt that the videotapes (those depicting torture, as well as innocuous home movies depicting a

¹¹³Kirk Makin, "Bernardo expected to testify as defence set to present its case: Strategy may involve shifting blame for deaths to ex-wife," Globe and Mail [Toronto] 14 Aug. 1995: p. A1.

boyish charmer) had given her a pretty good idea of Bernardo. She still looked forward, however, to finally seeing and hearing the real thing, "live, up close and in person."¹¹⁴

That day came on Aug. 15. The next day, all three papers' main stories had similar headlines, revolving around Bernardo's assertion that he did not kill Mahaffy or French. The reports also took similar approaches in portraying Bernardo; generally, they qualified their descriptions. Thus, the Star reporters wrote that "he seemed sure of himself,"¹¹⁵ and the Sun reporters noted that he "[appeared] to be near tears."¹¹⁶ (The Sun article, however, began with a more definitive phrase: "An apologetic and contrite Paul Bernardo.") In an article devoted to Bernardo's appearance on the witness stand, the Globe reporter, Makin, observed that "Twice during the morning, he appeared to tremble during seemingly contrite discussions about the deaths of the two girls."¹¹⁷ The Star and the Sun also included descriptions of Bernardo's body language. For example, news reporters wrote that he stood erect, and nodded emphatically. Makin included such description, but also interpreted it. "Switching back and forth between righteous indignation and flustered innocence at the broadsides from Mr. Houlahan, Mr. Bernardo

¹¹⁴Christie Blatchford, "Finally, we get to see Bernardo--live," Toronto Sun 15 Aug. 1995: p. 5.

¹¹⁵Jim Rankin, Nick Pron and John Duncanson, "'I didn't kill these girls': But Bernardo admits kidnapping, rape," Toronto Star 16 Aug. 1995: p. A1.

¹¹⁶Scott Burnside and Alan Cairns, "'I didn't kill these girls': Bernardo testifies in his own defence," Toronto Sun 16 Aug. 1995: p. 4.

¹¹⁷Kirk Makin, "Confidence grows during first day in witness box," Globe and Mail [Toronto] 16 Aug. 1995: p. A5.

occasionally aimed beseeching looks at Judge LeSage."¹¹⁸

The Sun's columnist was more explicit in her interpretation. Blatchford accused Bernardo of putting on faces. One of them was a sincere face: "it was as though this was how he imagined people who felt regret would look."¹¹⁹ With Bernardo on the stand, the Star introduced another columnist, Peter Cheney (DiManno had never resumed her assignment at the trial). Like Blatchford, Cheney felt that Bernardo was acting for the audience. The accused, in contending that he did not kill the two teenagers, admitted he had hurt a lot of people and deserved to be punished.

It was a moment of high drama and emotion. Bernardo seemed near tears, and his hands reached toward the jurors...

And so, with that element of contrition out of the way, like the compulsory figures of an ice-skater, Bernardo composed himself, and his voice changed to the deadpan style he would use to tell his story.¹²⁰

Bernardo's defence lawyer questioned him for only half a day. Then the Crown spent a week cross-examining the accused. During this time, the Globe and the Star introduced a number of their news reports with warnings that the content could offend readers. (These warnings had also appeared earlier in the trial, at the beginning of some stories that described, for the first time, scenes of explicit sex or violence on videotapes.) For the most part, news articles depicted Bernardo as cool on the stand; so did the columns. Blatchford said he was detached from life on earth--from the morality shared by

¹¹⁸Makin, "Confidence grows during first day in witness box "

¹¹⁹Christie Blatchford, "Icy Bernardo chills soul," Toronto Sun 16 Aug 1995 p. 5

¹²⁰Peter Cheney, "Testimony that exceeded sordid imagination," Toronto Star 16 Aug 1996: p. A12.

most.¹²¹ Cheney called Bernardo, among other things, a man "who looks like Beaver Cleaver, yet behaved like Satan."¹²² This was not the first time that Bernardo's actions had been described as devilish. Indeed, the man himself, along with his ex-wife, had been called evil and monstrous in various articles and letters to the editor throughout the trial. When Rosen gave his closing argument to the jury, the defence lawyer (as mentioned in the introduction to this thesis) stated that his client "may in some respects be the devil incarnate, but even the devil deserves the benefit of the law."¹²³ News reports in the Globe and the Sun focused on this quotation in their headlines and first few paragraphs, while the quotation concluded the report in the Star. Rosen had also rhymed off a list of names Bernardo had been called, and two papers mentioned a few of those names. The third paper, the Sun, repeated every name in a separate article. They included fraud, twisted, bent, broken, narcissistic, misanthropic, misogynistic, stalker, lecher, sicko, freak, hollow, empty, rotten, heartless, maniac, heathen, deviant, mystery and enigma.¹²⁴

Throughout the trial, the newspapers published enormous amounts of copy. The Star averaged one full page most of the time, except when Homolka or Bernardo was on the stand. Then, the Star published at least two full pages. The Sun, a physically smaller

¹²¹Christie Blatchford, "Bernardo untouched by the terror," Toronto Sun 17 Aug. 1995. p. 5.

¹²²Peter Cheney, "In this heavyweight courtroom clash, one title bout that will see no winner," Toronto Star 18 Aug. 1995: p. A14.

¹²³Kirk Makin, "Bernardo can be called devil but not murderer, Rosen says: Defence attacks Homolka's credibility in address to jury," Globe and Mail [Toronto] 29 Aug. 1995: p. A1.

¹²⁴Burnside and Cairns, "Almost every name in the book."

paper, also doubled its typical output, from two pages to four or more, when the former wife and husband took turns testifying. (This tally does not include space given to letters, or to columnists who did not regularly write about the Bernardo story.) The Globe's coverage might seem slight by comparison, but one must consider that it is a business paper, and unlike the other newspapers, assigned only one reporter to cover the trial. On some days, such as the day Bernardo took the stand, Makin's copy (along with pictures) filled more than one full page in the Globe.

Still, the newspapers outdid themselves when the jury was sequestered. The next day, the Globe published more than four pages on the Bernardo trial. One and a half of those pages examined Bernardo and Homolka. Referring to psychiatric evaluations, police reports and stories from their friends (including information ruled inadmissible at trial), Makin outlined Bernardo's and Homolka's childhoods, their relationship, and Homolka's state of mind since going to prison. "What emerges is a one-in-a-million conjugal match involving an out-and-out sadistic sex addict and a woman whose seemingly independent ways masked the psyche of a masochistic follower."¹²⁵ In another article, by Henry Hess, Bernardo's father admitted his wife had an affair three decades earlier, and Bernardo was the product. Ken and Marilyn Bernardo acknowledged they could have been better parents. However, they refused to accept blame for his crimes: "they rejected the implication, unspoken but clearly felt, that they raised a monster."¹²⁶ The day these

¹²⁵Kirk Makin, "Paul and Karla: sadistic sex addict and compliant partner," Globe and Mail [Toronto] 1 Sept. 1995: p. A6.

¹²⁶Henry Hess, "Ken Bernardo admits Paul's not his son," Globe and Mail [Toronto] 1 Sept. 1995: p. A8.

articles appeared, the jury reached its verdict of guilty on all nine counts. (Those counts, as the Star reminded the audience every day by highlighting them among the trial coverage, were two counts each of kidnapping, forcible confinement, aggravated sexual assault and first-degree murder, and one count of committing an indignity to a human body, the dismemberment of Mahaffy.) The next day, the Globe printed another five pages of Bernardo articles. One of these focused only on the psychiatrists' reports on Homolka. Another article examined other couples who killed. And Makin clearly took on the role of columnist, providing a first-person perspective of the trial. The column included how he perceived Bernardo and Homolka.

The Star published only about one and a half pages on the day the jury was sequestered. Its two articles avoided analysis of Bernardo and Homolka. Instead, one article announced that the jury had yet to return a verdict; the second article revealed that the Crown and Bernardo's defence lawyers had tried to avoid a full-blown trial but could not agree on a plea bargain. Following the verdict, however, the Star published more than three pages of Bernardo articles in its front section, including a feature story on the role of pornography in Bernardo's life. Another five pages in the paper's "Insight" section read like a storybook. The Star's trial reporters, Nick Pron, John Duncanson and Jim Rankin, narrated Bernardo's history, beginning with when his parents met, and ending with his arrest. The story included a bit of background on Homolka as a child and teenager. The next day's edition offered more than seven pages of Bernardo coverage, including a tale, in the Insight section, of how Homolka acted while arranging her deal with the Crown.

People following the trial in the Sun also had plenty to keep them occupied. While

the jury was still sequestered, the newspaper published more than 13 pages. A special section was created for eight of these pages, and small banners announced, "What The Jury Didn't Hear."¹²⁷ One article informed readers that at Bernardo's bedside was a novel called American Psycho, about a sadistic serial killer.¹²⁸ Other articles considered psychiatric reports of Homolka, and Bernardo's power-hungry, anger-filled rap lyrics. The next day, the Sun provided another special section, this one wrapped around the outside of the regular paper. Twelve pages detailed Bernardo's guilty verdict, the reaction of the victims' families, and how Rosen could defend his client, "the devil".¹²⁹ In another article, Homolka's mother said she and her husband had done nothing wrong in raising their daughter. Still another story focused on a statement by Rosen, that Bernardo was just a human being. But the coverage did not end there. The next day, more than five pages included reports about how the FBI profiles of the Scarborough rapist and French's killer accurately described Bernardo, and how a former FBI agent explained sexual sadists and their compliant victims.

From this sketch of the coverage, we can see that it was nothing if not voluminous. Even before the jury was sequestered and the newspapers began their three-day blitz, some readers felt that they were being inundated with details they would rather not know.

There is no need for the public to have such in-depth knowledge of the

¹²⁷This was, as well, the headline on the Sun's front page on Sept. 1, 1995.

¹²⁸Alan Cairns and Scott Burnside, "Life imitates 'art' in Bernardo 'bible': He was mirror image of twisted novel character," Toronto Sun 1 Sept. 1995: pp. 2, 3 (Special section).

¹²⁹Tracy Nesdoly, "Defending The Devil," Toronto Sun 2 Sept. 1995: p. A11

details of the horrific events; this is why we have a judge and a jury. Your approach to this matter shows a total disregard for the impact this may have on the grieving families, as well as our society.¹³⁰

What good does this type of sensational coverage do anyone? Why does the public need to know all the details of what happened to these girls? Throw in a few slang terms instead of the correct words, and your article would make a terrific piece for any pornographic magazine. And this is now available to anyone of any age simply by picking up the daily newspaper.¹³¹

The journalists recognized that the details were overwhelming many people. At the start of the jury's 10-day break, DiManno thought readers needed time off, too. Though people continued to follow the case, DiManno wrote that they had reached a point where they no longer wanted to chat about it while standing around the water cooler.¹³² This thesis has just begun to delve into the details, however. In the following chapters, I intend to analyze the coverage more closely, looking at how factors may have influenced the media to construct news that supported the status quo. First, however, I will consider comments made by journalists during personal interviews. These interviews provide a look behind the scenes, and contribute to my analysis of news coverage.

¹³⁰Zena Pendlebury, letter to editor, "Expected more from The Star," Toronto Star 15 June 1995: p. A28.

¹³¹Jan Vicars, letter to editor, "Publishing Bernardo trial's lewd details unconscionable," Toronto Star 15 June 1995: p. A28.

¹³²DiManno, "Break is a welcome respite from relentless testimony."

Chapter Three

Every journalist regularly covering the trial for the Globe, Star and Sun, save one, gave me a personal interview during the summer or early fall of 1995. Most interviews lasted more than one hour; some lasted for nearly two. When arranging the interviews, I requested at least an hour of the journalists' time. Such a request might seem small, but during the trial, the eight journalists with whom I spoke were often working 12-hour days, and some of them were writing books about Bernardo in their spare time. Each hour away from work was precious, and I greatly appreciate the time they gave me. I also want to note that, while I may look critically at their work, I have a deep respect for the journalists themselves. They took on a job few people could handle, absorbing horrific evidence every day, and then attempting to turn that evidence into lengthy, accurate stories, or perceptive columns. With this in mind, I will return to my thesis question: did the coverage confirm the academic viewpoint that media encounter forces in their daily routines, which cause them to construct news that supports the status quo? In this chapter, I will refer to the interviews in examining the four forces discussed in the academic literature.

At the conclusion of the academic review, I posited that the influences of business and personal biases (of news reporters) appeared impossible to prove. In the case of business, scholarly work contends that publishers rarely talk to journalists, and journalists seldom know who is on their paper's board of directors; journalists write neither to please advertisers, nor to sell newspapers. In the case of the Bernardo trial, journalists certainly

were not writing to promote a particular product. However, one could contend that journalists were writing sensational stories to sell more newspapers, thereby increasing readership. Consequently, both media owners and their advertisers would be pleased. Jim Rankin at the Star raised and dismissed this theory. (Rankin supplemented the work of the Star's two main trial reporters, Nick Pron and John Duncanson.) Rankin said that if the newspaper's money managers wanted to sell more newspapers, they would make sure that every day, the trial coverage appeared above the paper's fold, with a splashy headline. "They're not doing that...That's not the kind of thing you want to flaunt on your front page. How do you go to an advertiser and say, 'Listen, our flashy Bernardo coverage has upped circulation by so much.'"¹³³ Instead, Rankin said the paper took a subtler approach, by placing trial stories below the front page's fold, for example. Ironically, this approach probably earned the Star more readers, who appreciated the toned-down coverage, Rankin said. "I think sales have to be up. They've got to be up."¹³⁴

Such statements were common among reporters. They tended to believe that more people were reading and buying their newspapers, but they offered little or no proof. Cairns at the Sun said his paper's Bernardo coverage was attracting more readers than the coverage provided by other papers, but he had little evidence to back his assertion. He said that people involved in the case had told him they preferred reading the Sun. "And I

¹³³Jim Rankin, personal interview, 9 Aug. 1995.

¹³⁴Some would dispute Rankin's perspective that the Star's coverage was not sensational. They could note that a Bernardo story frequently appeared on the front page, and the story spilled over onto another one or two pages inside the paper. Those pages often provided explicit detail of the victims' rapes, assaults and murders.

think part of it is, you assume that, because you keep breaking stories. We had people calling us up from TV stations, radio stations, going, 'Well, is this (the latest story) true?'" Peter Cheney at the Star had a different way of judging interest in his paper's coverage. He said he had been told that the Star was selling 35,000 extra copies per day during the trial, but his personal evidence came from what he called the "subway test".

When I'm on the subway, I look at what people are reading. And I talk to people--my relatives and my friends--and I know what they're naturally interested in. A lot of times they're polite and they'll say, "Oh, that story you did was very interesting," but I know it's not true. In the case of the Bernardo stuff, they were really, really interested.¹³⁵

Thus, journalists had little definite knowledge of how many people were buying their newspapers; they were told, or heard, or believed that their papers were doing well. They also tended to say that they felt no pressure to sell newspapers. Instead, they said they felt pressure to do a good job and to be first with the story. Obviously, competition between newspapers (in particular, between the Star and the Sun) came into play, but journalists competed for journalistic pride, not monetary gain. They and their editors did not want another paper to come out with a story before they did. As Scott Burnside at the Sun said,

Management's always happy when we do a story that is right and the other guys don't have. But no one's suggested to me that if circulation doesn't go up X per cent, I'm off the case. It doesn't happen that way. I mean, there's pressure. If the Star runs a story that we don't have, they want to know, "Is that right? Why don't you have it?"¹³⁶

The competition was particularly intense before the trial, as reporters searched out new

¹³⁵Peter Cheney, personal interview, 8 Sept. 1995.

¹³⁶Scott Burnside, personal interview, 2 Aug. 1995.

information. The trial, however, dampened the competition to a certain extent, since the judge could find journalists in contempt if they strayed from the evidence presented in the courtroom. Reporters still pushed the limits, though. Burnside said he and others at his paper annoyed the judge by publishing an interview with a former lover of Bernardo. The woman from South Carolina was not a witness in the trial. Burnside said he and Cairns had interviewed her for a book they published after the trial.

Her name came up in testimony, and the Star had earlier interviewed the prostitute from Atlantic City (with whom Bernardo and Homolka had sex, videotaping the incident)... We said, well, the Star is inevitably going to send someone to South Carolina to find this girl. We've got the stuff, let's use it.

While journalists felt pressure to beat others to a story, they indicated that they were driven by professional pride, not their managers' capitalist motives. Such pride also led them to fight for the integrity of their stories. Journalists at the Star, in particular, had to push editors to publish information they thought people should know. John Duncanson said that clashes were inevitable, because a journalist's job is to tell a story, while the job of senior editors and lawyers is to make sure the story does not trample on people's democratic rights and freedoms (in this case, Bernardo's right to a fair trial). According to Duncanson, "yelling and screaming and fighting, that's natural."¹³⁷ He said that on occasion, he and the other reporters stayed at work until midnight, arguing to have a story, or certain details within it, published.

Apparently, Rosie DiManno spent many evenings fighting for her columns, too. I tried, several times, to arrange an interview with DiManno, but was never successful.

¹³⁷John Duncanson, personal interview, 7 Sept. 1995.

Thus, the information I have about her troubles at the Star is second-hand. However, I believe my main source is very reliable, in her ability to provide DiManno's perspective. Christie Blatchford is a friend of DiManno. Blatchford said that DiManno had difficulty determining where the Star editors were drawing the line, separating that which was morally acceptable to publish from that which was not. After DiManno had crossed this line a couple of times, and editors had decided against running her column (known as "killing" a column), they all agreed that she would stay late at night, going through each day's column with editors and a lawyer, until they reached a compromise. Blatchford says this arrangement worked well until a young woman took the stand. Homolka had helped Bernardo try to seduce this woman, who had a personal relationship with a second woman. Blatchford and DiManno both wanted to write about how they were outraged that the second woman was continuing a friendly correspondence with Homolka in prison. The columnists were limited in describing the relationship because of a publicity ban on the first woman's identity. Blatchford recalled,

I just got around it by saying that [the woman writing to Homolka] had a personal relationship with one of Bernardo's other victims, and I think Rosie probably pushed the line a little bit farther. That's my sense of it. I don't know; I never saw the story. At 10 o'clock, [DiManno] thought they'd reached a happy compromise. She went home.¹³⁸

An hour later, an editor called to tell her the managing editor had killed her column. Blatchford said DiManno was in a rage, and stayed home from work for two days. "By the afternoon of the second day, when they realized at the Star that she was OK, that she hadn't killed herself or something, they got mad. Because she hadn't shown up for work

¹³⁸Christie Blatchford, personal interview, 6 Sept. 1995.

and she hadn't phoned in, they formally said she went AWOL, and then suspended her for the rest of that week." Blatchford said DiManno wanted to cover the trial the next week, but editors would not let her, instead asking Cheney to return from his family vacation to write a column while Bernardo was on the stand.

Thus, it appears that journalists feel pressure to compete, but not in order to sell more newspapers. Rather, pressure stems from a sense of professional pride, which also leads journalists to fight for the integrity of their stories. Interviews with the journalists support the dominant academic viewpoint that the factor of business does not play a large role in influencing how crime is covered. Indeed, within the scope of this thesis, the factor is impossible to prove. Therefore, I will not examine it when assessing the Bernardo trial coverage in the following chapters.

Another influence, which needs to be considered at this point, is that of journalists' personal biases. Some contend that journalists with liberal biases do not work to support the status quo. In fact, news workers at elite media have been accused of using their liberal biases to attack conservative power structures. Yet in the review of academic literature, Lotz pointed out that journalists' left-wing viewpoints are rarely reflected in news copy. Scholars examining the copy say it tends to lean to the right. One may contend that journalists, wishing to please their newspapers' business interests, put aside their liberal biases to manipulate the masses in favor of the status quo. However, I have just dismissed the media's business interests as a source of direct or overt influence deserving attention in this thesis.

Instead, one may posit that journalists recognize their liberal biases but want their

news articles to appear objective. (Makin at the Globe noted that any reporter covering a beat gains some opinions over time, whether those opinions be left- or right-wing. However, he said that all reporters at the Globe, Star and Sun usually follow a classic writing format, which involves trying to make the article appear objective.¹³⁹) In attempting to avoid showing their biases, journalists may overcompensate when they report, so that their articles actually slant in the opposite direction. With this in mind, Lotz pointed out that if researchers want to find solid evidence of personal biases in the news, they should study the final media products, not the journalists' mindsets. It would be a specious endeavour to try to link news reporters' liberal biases, which may have been revealed in interviews I conducted, with their Bernardo coverage.

Conservative opinions of reporters also may not be reflected in their articles. Indeed, simply trying to label a reporter as liberal or conservative can be a difficult, if not impossible, process. For example, if reporters at "elite" media supposedly have liberal biases, then reporters at papers with a reputation for catering to the masses could be thought to have conservative biases. Cairns at the Sun showed a right-leaning perspective when he discussed how people criticize the media for not providing every tidbit of information. He said the media do so, but people lack media literacy, and fail to read and analyze everything that is available to them.

The kicking of the media is a symptom of a society that's come to depend too much on its government to give it stuff. We've got state welfare. Everything's given to you. If you don't have a house, we'll give you a house. If you don't have any money, here it is...People expect the media to put everything on a platter for them, and if everything falls

¹³⁹Kirk Makin, personal interview, 11 July 1995.

apart, blame the media, especially the Toronto Sun.

One might expect Cairns to hold the conservative view that individuals should take responsibility for their actions (a theme that also has relevance for cultural concepts, to be discussed later). Yet he is, arguably, the journalist with the softest spot for Homolka. Calling her a compliant victim of Bernardo, Cairns said journalists judged Homolka too quickly. He described how they reported that she did not have to marry Bernardo, could have freed Mahaffy and French, and could have reported the assault on one of his other victims, Jane Doe.

We've dissected [Homolka's] role in this left, right, up, down, centre, inside out. It's very easy for confident, self-starting, motivated people with an ego to judge Karla. It's very easy. I mean, you're safe...But put yourself in her shoes...I'm not saying that she should be exonerated, but I'm saying in order to understand her, we have to look at her viewpoint, and we have to understand that the guy who was at her side was a sexual sadist and a psychopath.

Thus, examining interviews for journalists' personal biases can be a murky exercise. Furthermore, one should not look to interviews for guidance in finding biases in news reports, because opinions may not be reflected in reports, as journalists attempt to achieve objectivity. Columnists, however, are a species different from news reporters, in that their job is to express their personal opinions, as well as to provide color. Cheney, of the Star, and Blatchford, of the Sun, were the two columnists whom I interviewed. Cheney described the theory behind his job. "The editors said, 'Look, people can't handle this. They want somebody with some insight to go in there and tell them what it's really like.' And so basically, that's what I was trying to do." Cheney's regular job was writing features, and he said when he stepped into the role of columnist for the Bernardo trial, he

tried to act as a sociological observer or historian, writing about the courtroom scene

There's something that's missing in the straight news report. It's almost like there's some charge in the air when you're in there. When you recount the facts, you get some sense of it, and yet there's something still missing. And so a skilled observer should be able to say [what's missing].

A comment Cheney made in an interview appears to show that he brought a centrist point of view to his work. (As with the other journalists I interviewed, I did not ask Cheney to label himself as right- or left-wing. Rather, I am interpreting biases from comments he made during the course of discussion.) Cheney mentioned that he did not know whether Bernardo was a product of nature or nurture, but he looked forward to articles examining the age-old debate. This comment indicates that Cheney had not yet settled on a conservative or liberal viewpoint to explain Bernardo--he had not decided whether the individual or society should take the blame. Still, Cheney's family life created a personal bias that had a conservative slant. He had a nine-year-old daughter, and this affected how he reacted when listening to the videotapes of Bernardo assaulting Mahaffy and French. "It struck a real fear in me. And reading about him driving around in his damn Nissan, videotaping girls at the doughnut shop. My daughter, occasionally, is allowed to walk up the alley to the doughnut shop. It terrified me."

Cheney was judging Bernardo's alleged activities as wrong, thereby taking a conservative stance. Liberals, holding to the labelling theory of deviance, would say that no single behaviour is intrinsically deviant. However, sexual murder may be considered an activity so abhorrent, across all societies, that few people, if any, could see it as anything other than deviant. Thus, Cheney's opinions may be seen as moderate, especially since he

said he had not decided whether Bernardo was inherently bad, and should take full responsibility for his actions, or a product of his environment, in which case, his parents and society would be to blame.

If Cheney was undecided about Bernardo, he had definite opinions about Blatchford. He called her "a real right-wing law-and-order columnist." While saying he respected her as a wordsmith with a clear point of view, Cheney commented that her work was predictable because of her explicit bias. "I think she failed to appreciate some of the subtleties of [the trial] because she was so busy hating this man (Bernardo). And you knew that she would hate him, because he was a criminal. She's a right-wing columnist. Her constituency is people who want the death penalty." Blatchford never called herself right-wing, but she made a comment that indicates her conservatism. She said that ultimately, Bernardo must take responsibility for his actions.

I don't see how his family or his environment or his teachers or his lack of whatever, explain what he became, because lots of people emerge from much more damaged childhoods--certainly, much more physically abusive childhoods--than his, with far less, and become perfectly decent, lovely people. I think he made himself up, because I think the one thing that maybe defined him is he always did the easiest thing...It's a societal question, but I don't think it's our responsibility. I think we made it easier for him to create himself, more acceptable for him to create himself. But we didn't do it. He did it.

Blatchford, then, exhibited a conservative personal bias, and we may consider this bias when examining how she, along with the other columnists and reporters, portrayed the victims, accomplice, and Bernardo himself.

The third influence that must be considered is that of bureaucracy. Interviews with journalists provide a behind-the-scenes look at the routine, bureaucratic forces that

affected how they constructed news. As discussed in the review of academic literature, the influence of bureaucracy is two-fold. Journalists must meet the institutional needs of their newspapers, while working under constraints imposed by the institutions that they cover. First, I will consider the media bureaucracy. In the academic review, I referred to Rock, who stated that journalists do not have an inherent news sense. Rather, they have difficulty determining which event, among a jumble of happenings, would interest their audience. The news organizations rely on the imperatives of space and time to create order out of chaos. Reporters must write predetermined amounts of copy each day, and each story must provide a fresh angle, yet must have continuity with the story published the day before. The Bernardo trial promised a steady stream of information that would entice readers, and every paper set aside unusual amounts of space for the coverage. At the Star, Duncanson said he and the other reporters were pleased, at first, to be given so much space to fill. "We were really kind of happy and proud that here we were, we've got two pages a day. No other reporter or newspaper gets two pages a day. But then, by about day three, it's, like, when is this going to stop?" When evidence at the trial was deemed less exciting, editors requested only one page of copy. The request was a relief, and Duncanson laughed as he said this, because one page is still an extraordinary amount of copy for a single news story. At the Sun, Cairns and Burnside both noted that they had less space to fill with copy than reporters for the Star, but they felt that they had to spend more time shaping their stories.¹⁴⁰ Burnside pointed to a bureaucratic exigency, the

¹⁴⁰When evidence was considered particularly exciting, such as when Homolka or Bernardo was on the stand, the Sun devoted four or more pages to trial coverage. However, photographs and drawings occupied much of the space.

tabloid format of his paper, to support his view.

Obviously, [the Star reporters] write longer. They have a lot more space to work with. That's a function of being a broadsheet and being the kind of paper they are. We have to write much tighter and have to be more concise. I can't run three or four quotes from some person. I've got to pick one quote. And sometimes, it's trading off a quote for a graph (paragraph) of description or a graph of background. So that's part of what we wrestle with every day. But that's just intrinsically part of working at a tab and working at a broadsheet.

Makin recognized that his paper was also setting aside an uncommon amount of space for trial coverage. "Unprecedented is a big word, but it's kind of close to that. You know, giving full pages to any trial in the Globe is very unusual." In describing a typical day, in which he had to spend all the trial breaks writing to keep on top of the story, Makin evoked the image of a routine form of newsgathering, which has evolved to serve the bureaucratic needs of the media. Journalists had a news beat. In the academic review, Fishman described how beats have both a topic to be covered (for example, justice) and a territory (for example, making the rounds through police headquarters and the courthouse). For Makin and the others during the summer of 1995, the topic was the Bernardo trial; the territory was the courthouse. Makin said the beat had a predictable routine. "There's so many media covering it, that we have a media line-up to get in for the good seats. The first reporter shows up around quarter to eight every morning." The courtroom doors opened 45 minutes later. Journalists marked their seats, and then chatted or bought a coffee. The trial started at 10 o'clock each morning, had a break in the morning and another in the afternoon, and usually ended between 4:30 and 5 p.m. Then Makin said he would "sweat it out," writing his story, and would usually finish

between seven and eight o'clock that evening. "So it's a pretty pressure-packed twelve-hour routine every day."

From Makin's description, we see that the beat's territory was limited. Journalists spent their days in the courtroom, recording the words of officials, such as those of the judge, prosecutor and defence lawyer. These officials could also agree to be interviewed in the hallways during breaks. (News articles indicate, though, that only the defence team made itself available for interviews. Reporters wrote that the Crown, Houlahan, said little outside court, and no paper published an interview with the judge. Traditionally, judges do not give interviews.) It is at this point that journalists felt the influence of the bureaucratic institution they were covering. They could not interview the two "unofficial" sources who were directly involved in the trial. Their only access to Bernardo and Homolka came in the form of videotapes and testimony given while on the stand. The legal system threatened them with charges of contempt of court if they interviewed other people and published information that could be prejudicial to Bernardo's right to a fair trial.

Of course, some journalists pushed the boundaries set by the bureaucracy. As mentioned earlier, journalists fought to publish information that editors and lawyers worried might affect the trial. Sometimes, editors went along with journalists. For example, as discussed above, a reporter for the Star tracked down the prostitute Bernardo and Homolka had hired in Atlantic City. Her printed comments were innocuous, though, as she expressed shock that the videotape of her having sex with the couple had been shown in court: "'Oh my God,' the petite bleached blonde exclaimed. 'So everybody has

seen me?"¹⁴¹ The Star's decision to publish this story encouraged the Sun to print the interview with Bernardo's former short-term lover from South Carolina. The article included the woman's description of her sexual relationship with Bernardo. "Initially, the sex was good and Bernardo was an attentive lover, she said. On the second weekend, Bernardo suggested they have anal sex. But after a short time she demanded he stop because it hurt. He did, and then fell asleep."¹⁴² The article also said Bernardo "flew into a rage" after another man made a pass at her.¹⁴³ In the earlier discussion of the influence of business, Burnside said that this article upset the judge. "He became quite stern and said, 'I don't want to see any more of that.' And that was fair. It's his trial. So we have been extremely cautious to not annoy him, and everything's vetted by lawyers at night, and we make sure all the 'allegeds' are in the right spot, and all the attributions there."

Burnside said he was proud of the restraint the media showed. He stated that while American reporters in Los Angeles were climbing over each other to get scoops at the O.J. Simpson trial, Canadian journalists in Toronto were trying to act with dignity. For example, Burnside said when the victims' families arrived at the courthouse, reporters gave them a wide berth. "No one scrums them, no one harangues them, no one bothers them." Thus, Bernardo reporters, while striving to get exclusive stories, felt that sometimes, restraint was appropriate. Some reporters even expressed approval of some

¹⁴¹Dale Brazao, "Prostitute shocked at role in trial," Toronto Star 9 June 1995: p. A12.

¹⁴²Alan Cairns and Scott Burnside, "Hot affair with Paul Bernardo," Toronto Sun 23 June 1995: p. 5.

¹⁴³Cairns and Burnside, "Hot affair with Paul Bernardo."

legal restrictions. The publication ban, forbidding reporters from divulging Homolka's deal, had no support from journalists. However, some felt that the judge at Bernardo's trial, Patrick LeSage, was correct in his ruling concerning the videotapes. A common argument was that journalists, as representatives of the public, needed to see and hear the tapes in order to assess Bernardo and Homolka, and make sure that the jury's verdict was appropriate. Pron recognized this argument, but said he was glad he did not see the videotapes. Pron, who had spent the past 15 years covering crime at the Star, said just listening to the tapes was disturbing.¹⁴⁴ In a column, Blatchford wrote that the judge's decision was "an imperfect, yet brilliantly Canadian compromise" that balanced the rights of the victims' families and those of the press, while preserving civility. She supported the judge's view that showing the tapes would debase humanity.¹⁴⁵

Bans were an obvious influence upon journalists, but the court system had subtler ways of affecting coverage. Cairns noted that the judge ruled certain evidence inadmissible, but Cairns believed the evidence was true. Unable to report all the facts, he said he could not provide a complete picture of who Bernardo was until after the trial. Rankin pointed to another subtle influence; the order of questioning changed how the media portrayed Homolka. He said that the Crown examined her first, and the media reported her point of view--that she was a battered woman. However, when the defence cross-examined her, she appeared combative and feisty, and the media portrayed her in

¹⁴⁴Nick Pron, personal interview, 7 Sept. 1995.

¹⁴⁵Christie Blatchford, "Tape ruling preserved some civility," Toronto Sun 31 May 1995: p. 5.

that light. Rankin said the change in coverage was "brought on by the manner of questioning, and it was simply that. We can't change a tone in the middle and start saying, well, she's evil. I'm not a columnist, I can't do that...In a trial, you're just covering what happens in court. You go overboard, and you're in contempt of court."

While columnists might appear to have more freedom, they are still governed by the fear of contempt charges. Blatchford noted,

It's easy to put yourself in contempt when you're writing opinion pieces. And if you don't write opinion pieces, what you end up writing is color pieces, and if they're good, they're almost as dangerous as columns, and if they're not, then they're boring and no one wants to read them.

She said that the trial's two main characters made her job easier, though Homolka was already convicted, and early in the trial, Bernardo's lawyers admitted he had kidnapped, confined and raped Mahaffy and French. "You couldn't very well slander somebody who says, 'Well, yeah, I raped and sodomized them, but I didn't do anything else.' Hard to get in trouble calling that guy names "

Thus, the interviews indicate that the bureaucracy of the media and of the court system affected how the journalists covered the trial. No one would argue that the coverage looked the same across the press, however. As Hall contended in the review of academic literature, each newspaper had its own social personality. This meant that each selected information, from a common pool, and coded it in the language that the newspaper felt its readers used themselves. For example, Makin noticed the Sun reported that each morning, a hotel near the courthouse prepared breakfast, which included a muffin, for Homolka. Makin said he did not feel the information would be important to

his readers. Burnside said readers at his paper would care because they were very interested in Homolka, and the muffin showed the special treatment she was receiving. "Plus, it's different. It's a little break. You take your humor...or you take your levity where you can get it."

Another illustration of the different social personalities of newspapers is the way the papers treated Bernardo's testimony that he had learned a method of sexual stimulation from spying on Tammy Homolka. In speaking generally, Makin said that he believed the Sun provided the most graphic coverage, followed by the Star. "The Star, if you get deep enough in the stories, you'll start hitting the real disgusting stuff...at the Globe, we're being pretty careful. We won't shy away if it really is very germane to what happened that day." The following excerpts support Makin's opinion that his paper was the least graphic. They illustrate the different ways the newspapers selected and coded Bernardo's testimony about Tammy. The Globe only hints at "an embarrassing comment". The Star is more explicit, mentioning the comment near the beginning of an article but providing the details at the end. The Sun uses the comment as the focus of a sidebar (a secondary story), with the headline, "Comment outrages prosecutor."

Mr. Bernardo apologized once, after an embarrassing comment he made about Tammy's personal life. Mr. Houlihan rebuked him harshly for slurring the dead girl.¹⁴⁶

Bernardo is seen in one (videotape) sequence rubbing his own nipple while having sex with French.

¹⁴⁶Kirk Makin, "Ex-wife used fiction, Bernardo says: Defendant points to movie scene, lyrics, in charging that Homolka fabricated evidence," Globe and Mail [Toronto] 22 Aug 1995: p. A7.

He said he had "picked that up from Tammy Homolka when I watched her masturbate"
 Houlahan stepped aside from the podium and scowled at Bernardo.
 "You mean you'd demean a young girl whose death you helped to cause and expect us to believe it?" he challenged
 Bernardo immediately apologized.¹⁴⁷

Even for this trial, it was a comment that everyone, including the accused, seemed to know was over the line.
 Accused sex killer Paul Bernardo was trying to explain why he needed to pull on his own nipple while he was raping Kristen French while his wife was trying to please him sexually.
 "I did that frequently I picked that one up from Tammy Homolka when I watched her masturbate one night," Bernardo explained without emotion...
 Houlahan became incensed...
 "I apologize if I demeaned her," Bernardo said quickly...
 Within seconds, though, he mentioned the incident again.¹⁴⁸

We see that the influence of bureaucracy did not prevent the newspapers from maintaining their distinctive social personalities, which journalists readily recognized.

The fourth influence to be considered is that of cultural concepts. In the interviews, two such concepts emerged, which have relevance for this thesis. The concepts have their origins in two doctrines, which one may argue are part of the cultural air in Western society: patriarchy and cultural idealism. As seen in the academic review, Benedict asserted that sex crimes evoke deep-seated public beliefs about gender roles. These beliefs, fostered by the media, call into play myths that cause people to stereotype rape victims as virgins or vamps. Schudson stated that cultural idealism--the belief that each

¹⁴⁷John Duncanson, Nick Pron and Jim Rankin, "Bernardo talks of deadly guns, innocent roses: Says rock group Guns 'N Roses inspired title for his rap album," Toronto Star 22 Aug. 1995: p. A9.

¹⁴⁸Scott Burnside and Alan Cairns, "Comment outrages prosecutor," Toronto Sun 22 Aug. 1995: p. 5

individual has a free will and is responsible for his or her own actions--informs how people think society should work, and how they categorize others.

The first cultural concept is that of the innocence of youth. Young people, and young females in particular, are thought to possess a naivete about the ways of the world. If something should happen to tarnish that innocence, the event may be used in a moral tale to condemn the person responsible. Benedict's writing applies here, in that young females who violate their gender role, and behave in a way that is not considered appropriate for young ladies, may be blamed for their own rapes and stereotyped as vamps. Young women who do not stray from their traditional gender role, and are attacked, may be seen as virgins. In this case, the morality play would blame the attacker.

Nick Pron, at the Star, acknowledged the stereotypes, although he used the terms "bad girls" and "good girls". Pron said that police and the public perceive young women who are out late at night as courting danger. When these women are abducted or killed, the press responds by giving them less coverage than others who were supposedly behaving properly. "It's the old rape thing," Pron said. "You know, you got raped because you were asking for it. You wore the right kind of clothes. It's crap. I mean, every murder of a young person or anybody should be treated the same, and unfortunately, they're not." Pron said while his newspaper has a policy of pursuing the story of each and every murder, other media fail to give enough publicity to the murders of women who had been hitchhiking or out late at night when they disappeared. He also said he disapproved of the fact that "bad girls" receive less attention, "but that's just the way it is." He tried to pursue every murder story with equal zeal, but he could not make other media follow his

lead. Part of the problem, Pron said, was that those media lack the resources the Star possesses.¹⁴⁹

In discussing rape myths, it may be instructive to provide Benedict's explanation for why they may persist. She argued that the myths let non-victims feel less vulnerable. The myths hold victims up to "a set of old-fashioned moral standards far more rigid than are normally applied in everyday life, so that the victim is bound to fail and look like a 'bad' woman."¹⁵⁰ Non-victims may reassure themselves that they behave differently, and so are safe from being raped. Following this logic, one may argue that when a woman who does meet the high standards is raped, non-victims react with outrage; after all, it could have been them. The media reinforce this attitude by giving a great deal of coverage to these stereotyped virgins.

The cultural concept of the innocence of youth was raised in the context of Mahaffy and French. Journalists inevitably talked about the young women's portrayals when they first disappeared. "Look at Leslie Mahaffy," Pron said. "She was out at 2 o'clock in the morning. She got abducted. She got zero coverage. Kristen French, middle of the afternoon...and just the complete opposite (in terms of coverage), because it's seen as a good-girl murder. And that's just the way, unfortunately, we see things." Pron's

¹⁴⁹Pron gave the following example: "Radio stations don't really have reporters who go out and pursue stuff, unless it's like a press conference. So they just look at what we do and if they choose to follow us or not...it's up to them."

Once again, the bureaucratic influence appears, as radio stations generally have fewer reporters than a large newspaper like the Star. The stations must consider how best to assign their reporters, to guarantee that stories fill the stations' numerous newscasts each day.

¹⁵⁰Benedict, p. 18.

colleague, Duncanson, criticized the way the media, including his newspaper, portrayed Mahaffy, but he put the initial blame on the police.

They [described] her as a runaway, so the media [didn't] care about her. She [was] a runaway; who cares about a runaway? They misidentified the body the first time. It was one of those cases where everywhere she turned, she seemed to get a bad trip from people. They just didn't seem to understand. She'd been described as rebellious. She was a teenager. I think she was a teenager like anybody is, had problems with her parents... I think she was misportrayed so many times, and eventually, the media just gave up because they never could appease the (Mahaffy) family.

Frank Davey, who published a book before the trial began, also argued that Mahaffy's status as a runaway caused the media to pay little attention to her disappearance. When her body was found encased in concrete blocks in a lake, however, he said the media saw an opportunity to attract readers and sell more newspapers.¹⁵¹ Reporters transformed Mahaffy, as well as French, from potentially complex people, to cardboard angels. They became flat characters whose purity and virginity had been sullied by monsters. (Davey said such characterization was sensational, and in the process, the media failed to examine societal responsibility for the creation of "monsters".) He stated that Mahaffy's transformation was particularly noticeable. When her body was discovered, her portrayal shifted from runaway to flower child. She was described as

¹⁵¹This accusation was met with scorn from some reporters interviewed for this thesis. The topic of Davey's book came up when interviewing Cairns, Burnside and Rankin, and they said that throughout the time they had covered Mahaffy, French, Homolka and Bernardo, they had tried to do a good job, not sell newspapers or future books. They called Davey a hypocrite, saying he aimed to capitalize on the case by publishing his book before Bernardo's trial began. (The book came wrapped in a black seal, with certain passages blacked out, ostensibly to respect the publication ban on Homolka's trial. People who bought a copy could send a form to the publisher to receive the missing passages once the ban was lifted.)

having brimmed with idealism and life. Mahaffy finally achieved full status as martyred virgin when her death was linked to the abduction of French. An honor student involved in school and church activities, French had an image ripe for transformation, Davey said. When the media discovered she was dead, she became a saint.¹⁵²

Pron denied that the media made Mahaffy and French martyrs. "I think if anybody made them saints, it was the people in St. Catharines. You know, they erected plaques and statues and monuments to French and that's a news event, so we reported on it, but we just told readers who she was, who they were." Burnside held the same point of view, attacking Davey's contention that reporters created martyrs to sell more newspapers.

Kristen French was who she was. She was an attractive, bright, obedient, wonderful human being. She did work in her grandmother's nursing home. She skated, she rowed, she did what her parents told her to, she was a wonderful person, and she was abducted walking home from school. Leslie Mahaffy was young, attractive, vivacious, friendly, all of those things, and was abducted after being at a wake for her friends. I don't think it's surprising that people might take that view (of martyrs) of those girls.

Davey also criticized reporters for calling the teenagers by their first names to further the image of the young virgins, but Burnside noted that reporters often use first names when referring to people who are young, or are victims of crimes or accidents, to familiarize the subjects with readers. "Kristen and Leslie, given their age and given what happened to them, they were young schoolgirls. Sometimes we've referred to them that way."

Yet the word "schoolgirl" could also contribute to the stereotype of the young virgin. The word evokes the image of an innocent, naive child in a uniform. Blatchford

¹⁵²Frank Davey, Karla's Web: A Cultural Investigation of the Mahaffy-French Murders (Toronto: Penguin Books Canada, 1994) pp. 30-7.

said the word depersonalized Mahaffy and French, and she feared it could lead people to care less about the victims. Consciously avoiding using the term in her columns, Blatchford said she found it offensive for another reason: "To me, they were young women. I don't want to say 'schoolgirl' because I think it panders to the fantasy that so captured Bernardo, with them in their kilts and stuff, you know what I mean?" We see that journalists recognized the cultural concept of the innocence of youth, and the stereotype it spawned, the virgin. They said they never intended to create martyrs, but just tried to explain who the teenagers were. In the next chapter, I will analyze the news coverage of the trial to see if the journalists succeeded.

The second cultural concept to emerge in interviews was the fundamental opposition and relationship of male and female. In the review of academic literature, Schudson raised this concept when talking about homosexuality. He said that homosexuality is considered an anomaly, and people use the "deviation" of same-sex relationships in moral tales to reinforce the concept. In this thesis, the opposition and relationship of male and female has relevance for how journalists thought of both Homolka and Bernardo. First, I will explore the concept in terms of Homolka. The concept stems from traditional, conservative gender roles (whose roots lie in patriarchy), which dictate that men are aggressive, while women are passive, doing as men say. While patriarchy informs this concept, cultural idealism helps to shape it. People believe individual men are responsible for their actions, but they are also ultimately responsible for the actions of the women they control. Thus, only men can act immorally, intentionally hurting others. Journalists

generally phrased this a different way: only men can be evil.¹⁵³ If a situation arises in which a man and a woman commit heinous acts together, people may stereotype the woman as a helpless victim (not to be confused with the ideal victim, the virgin).

Journalists acknowledged this cultural concept as an influence upon how people, including themselves, viewed Homolka. Cheney said he thought she "got off more easily" than Bernardo, partly because she was a woman.

We don't expect women to be as evil as men and when they commit crimes, we don't expect to punish them as hard. It's almost like the two kids, one a boy and one a girl, who break a window in school. I think the boy, people might be inclined to give him the strap, and the girl, they'd view as an aberration. Maybe they'd hug her and take her home. And I think that process was magnified in this case.

At least one reporter thought Homolka should have faced less responsibility than Bernardo. Cairns believed Homolka had fallen under the power of an evil man. "He's the architect here. He's the puppet master...She dances to his tune." He criticized some journalists, such as Blatchford, for forgetting that it was Bernardo who was on the stand. Cairns said they should have been focusing on him. Instead, they were spending too much time blaming a woman who was simply a compliant victim. The media, Cairns asserted, ignored issues such as battered-wife syndrome, and compartmentalized Homolka as evil.

Cairns's opinion introduces the possibility that Homolka was stereotyped, not as a helpless victim, but as a wicked woman. (Davey raised this spectre, saying that after Homolka was arrested, she was portrayed as the evil "dark woman" who appears at the side of the sinister villain in Gothic tales. This dark woman "frequently works to deceive

¹⁵³Rankin said that he believed many people consider someone with no conscience to be "pure evil".

and betray the heroine and to punish her for having intruded upon her own relationship with the villain."¹⁵⁴) By framing Homolka as a woman with evil intent, journalists could portray her as deviating from her proper role, and this deviation could be used in a moral tale, to reinforce the established cultural concept of the opposition and relationship of male and female.

While other journalists said they did not believe in the "helpless victim" image of Homolka, they also said she did not represent pure evil. At the Star, Rankin said she was a victim to the extent that Bernardo introduced her to criminal activity. "I don't think she ever would have done the things she's been involved in if she hadn't met that guy." But she did become involved, and passed up opportunities to save her sister, Mahaffy and French. "It reaches a point where you say, well, where does she stop being victim and where does she become accomplice? I think she's crossed that line," Rankin contended.

Blatchford recognized the pervasiveness of the idea that women cannot be evil. She said possessing this idea was dangerous. "That's what cost Kristen French her life, because she probably wouldn't have gone to a car with Bernardo. She went because there was this pretty little blonde waiting there." Blatchford said she thought the police and prosecution also did not understand Homolka's potential for evil when they arranged her plea bargain, although they had since learned that potential was great. "In this case, one of the greatest goods, oddly enough, is I think people are finally understanding that women can be as evil as men." She said it took men a little longer than women to learn this lesson, because women know the capabilities of their sex. From this examination of

¹⁵⁴Davey, p. 57.

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interviews, we see that journalists recognized, or held to, the cultural concept of the opposition and relationship between men and women. In a following chapter, I will analyze articles to see if this conservative concept influenced journalists in how they portrayed Homolka.

First, however, I will consider the concept in terms of Bernardo. As mentioned above, the concept stems from gender roles. The man, as aggressor, controls the woman, but is also responsible for her. Thus, he must provide for and protect her. A man who harms a woman deviates from his accepted role. He may still be excused if, for example, the offence was rape, and the woman may be blamed for driving him beyond control. Such an excuse becomes difficult to apply, however, if the man also killed his victim. Alternatively, the man may be stereotyped as a monster, or crazy sex fiend. As discussed in the literature review, this stereotype appeared in early American crime news, and persists today. Papke noted that the popular press (more than the bourgeois press) continues the tradition of framing stories in terms of the sensational or melodramatic crime against a person. This emphasis on a crime's most horrifying details diminishes the social complexity of circumstances surrounding the crime. Furthermore, society's role in crime is disregarded, as the press snubs the social and political aspects of crime in favor of portraying criminals and their victims as flat, one-dimensional characters.¹⁵⁵

In his book published before the trial, Davey contended that the press had portrayed Bernardo as a sex fiend or monster. "He has nothing to do with the people we associate with everyday but exists, rather, outside human norms: he is 'crazy,' 'loony,' or outside

¹⁵⁵Papke, p. 70.

of God's creation itself, 'evil,' a 'monster.'"¹⁵⁶ Such a portrayal was dangerous, Davey wrote, because it discouraged people from analyzing society's responsibility in creating Bernardo. They could feel safe, because he was an aberration. "This was not a crime likely to reoccur, this narrative suggested, unless new 'monsters' should somehow be spawned."¹⁵⁷ Journalists covering the trial generally acknowledged that society had some role in producing Bernardo. One exception was Cairns. "He is outside of society. Do I stalk? Do I rape? Do I kill? Do you do it? Does anyone in this room do it? He's one in thirty-million people. He is a monster, so his acts are monstrous. If Frank Davey doesn't see that, then I suggest he has a reality problem." Pron also called Bernardo a monster, adding that he deserves to be killed. At the same time, however, the Star reporter said that Bernardo's family life and society in general had produced the serial rapist and killer.

If you believe what we heard at the trial and what we've heard, he's just absorbed the worst of society and took it on as his own--the worst rap music, the violence from rap, the violence from pornography, women getting raped, men enjoying it...and then he came from a mixed-up family where the father was assaulting a young woman and the mother and the father weren't sleeping together and they were bickering and fighting.

Pron said the media simplify stories because they have a limited amount of space (a bureaucratic influence), but he pointed out that his newspaper did devote numerous pages to the task of trying to explain Bernardo.

Davey also criticized the media for portraying Bernardo not only as a monster, but as a monster in disguise. He said that while searching for Mahaffy and French's killer, police

¹⁵⁶Davey, p. 56.

¹⁵⁷Davey, p. 58.

distributed a drawing of "an extremely surly looking male face, in need of a shave"¹⁵⁸ Davey said that by publishing this photo, along with the FBI profile that described the suspect as remorseless, working class, and good with tools, the media helped create the image of an uneducated, muscle-bound brute. Then Bernardo stepped into the picture, with blond hair, conventionally attractive features, and a university education, he looked more like Prince Charming than the Beast. "If anything, this figure's monstrosity was accentuated by the fact that he had been able to pretend to be quite civilized."¹⁵⁹ Then, Davey argued, the media added horror to this already shocking tale of murder and mayhem by describing Bernardo and Homolka as extraordinarily ordinary. Readers could relate to the couple's lifestyle of eating at fast-food chains and renting movies, but they could also sense an enhanced commonality in the Bernardo's "fairytale" wedding and little pink house in the suburbs. The couple seemed to have achieved everything the average Canadian citizen could possibly want. They were Ken and Barbie (a comparison used more by the British media than Canadian media), seemingly perfectly ordinary. This enhanced commonality made them stars. Thus, their story became entertainment news, and they garnered even more attention.¹⁶⁰

Cheney recognized that journalists lacked sophistication when they relied on words such as "evil", "monster" and "fiend", and admitted he had used the word "evil" many times in his columns. "It's easy to slip off into this stock-phrase, the standardized

¹⁵⁸Davey, p. 38.

¹⁵⁹Davey, p. 38.

¹⁶⁰Davey, pp. 139-44.

description," Cheney said. However, he said that Bernardo was a monster "But his monstrosity is wrapped up in this weird, conflicted package" of different facets of his personality. One major facet was that he was able to present the face of "the blond-haired kid next door" to the world. It was this face that allowed him to continue committing crimes--no one realized he was a monster. Cheney said journalists who failed to convey this element of Bernardo did a poor job portraying him.

Cheney's contention that Bernardo was a monster conflicts with his earlier statement (when discussing personal biases) that he had not yet decided whether nature or nurture was to blame for Bernardo's character. The concept of nurture involves the idea that the society in which a person is raised helps form that person. If a monster is something created outside of society, then nurture cannot be to blame. Blatchford recognized the conundrum. As mentioned earlier, she had a personal bias in favor of believing that the individual must be responsible for his or her own actions. However, she said she never called Bernardo a monster, because she did not want to remove him from society. By using the word, she said journalists were "almost trying to explain him by making him so extra-large or extra-beyond human experience that there's nothing for the rest of us to worry about, because clearly, he's not one of us." To coalesce the ideas of human and evil, Blatchford differentiated between evil and monster.

I think there's no question that Bernardo's evil, but I think he's a carefully constructed evil. I think he picked all kinds of bits of modern pop culture and made himself up, essentially, out of all these little weird things. He knew exactly what he was doing, and I don't think he's a monster at all. I know guys like him, and I know, certainly, lots of women like her, to a different degree, obviously.

We see that some journalists believed the stereotype of "monster" was appropriate, while others called it a cliché that propounded the view of society as not responsible for Bernardo. The stereotype springs from the cultural concept of the opposition and relationship of male and female, in that men are the aggressive, more powerful sex, so they must protect the female sex. A man who deviates from this role may be condemned in a moral tale that reinforces the cultural concept. In the following chapters, I will examine whether such a moral tale arose in the coverage of the Bernardo trial

Chapter Four

An exploration of how the media covered the Bernardo trial requires attention to three subjects: the victims, Homolka and Bernardo. In this chapter, I will explore how the media portrayed the victims. I want to determine whether factors already discussed influenced the media to construct news, which supported the status quo. Earlier, I established that the factor of business is not a viable one for examination in this thesis. Thus, I will move to the factor of personal biases, and begin by examining columnists' work. I will refer to interviews to guide my assessment (Interviews with news reporters pointed out their possible biases, too, but applying insights from interviews to articles was deemed a specious endeavor.)

Cheney saw Blatchford as a right-wing, law-and-order columnist, and her opinion about individual responsibility supported this view. Many of her columns also showed this personal bias, and two columns have particular relevance in terms of the victims' portrayal. During the trial, articles often implied that the victims' families represented the victims, and in a column published on May 27, Blatchford equated the two. She wrote about how whenever pictures of the dead girls' corpses were shown on TV monitors to the judge, jury, lawyers and accused, Mahaffy's parents stood up and moved to sit directly behind the defence team. The team's monitor was visible to some spectators, and the Mahaffys wanted to block their view. Blatchford wrote that the parents' actions indicated how the trial was changing the justice system. "No longer is justice in Canada a straight line between the accused and the state: increasingly, it is a triangle, with the victims

forming the third leg."¹⁶¹ While the columnist recognized the Mahaffys' pain, and their desire to protect the girls' dignity, she said she feared they had another motive--to shame the defence for representing Bernardo. But Blatchford said the lead counsel, Rosen, did not back down. Instead, when cross-examining a witness, he waved pictures of French's corpse, so that everyone, including her parents, could see them. Blatchford applauded him.

I think he is refusing to be cowed by the families, by their genuinely awful plight and by the huge swell of public sympathy that exists for them.

I believe, in short, that in this, he is defending not only Paul Bernardo, but also the integrity of the system itself, and for that we owe him our thanks.¹⁶²

We see that Blatchford's column exhibited her personal bias for the traditional justice system. The column, in portraying victims (via their families), supported the conservative power structure.

Blatchford could appear a bit flexible on the issue of victims' expanding rights, though. The next week, she composed another opinion piece about the victims and their families, commenting again on the direction in which the justice system was moving. She noted how whenever the court adjourned, spectators and journalists were held back as the families made their way to private rooms reserved for them. "The message is unequivocal and unmistakeable--the new royalty in Canadian courts are victims, and victims'

¹⁶¹Christie Blatchford, "Court drama in the gallery: Victims' parents block TV images," Toronto Sun 27 May 1995: p. 4.

¹⁶²Blatchford, "Court drama in the gallery."

families”¹⁶³ She said the judge reinforced this shift in the justice system by ruling that the public would not be allowed to see the videotapes. He said the harm to the families was of utmost consideration when it came to viewing the tapes. Hearing the tapes, however, was a different story. The judge decided that he could balance the victims’ rights and the need for a fair and open trial by allowing the public to hear the tapes. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, Blatchford approved of this compromise. A brief glance at the column might give the reader the impression that she accepted the families’ harm as the paramount reason for not showing the tapes, but closer examination reveals that she was more concerned about the harm to society in general. Watching the tapes would debase the viewers’ humanity.

Tammy’s, Leslie’s and Kristen’s pain debases no one but the person or persons who caused it, but the *spectacle*--reporters taking notes, court rats staring--of a crowd watching that pain unfold would have diminished all of us, within and without that room, a little, and a little, in these matters, is the difference between civility and the dark other.¹⁶⁴

Blatchford’s concern about the expanding rights of victims did not mean that she lacked sympathy for the teenagers. Indeed, she expressed admiration for them and their parents. In one column, she said that people disturbed by the trial could find strength in “the miracle of Kristen French.”¹⁶⁵ Calling French brave and decent throughout her ordeal, Blatchford gave examples demonstrating these traits:

When [Bernardo] made Kristen play in bed with his whispering ex-wife,

¹⁶³Blatchford, “Tape ruling preserved some civility ”

¹⁶⁴Blatchford, “Tape ruling preserved some civility ”

¹⁶⁵Christie Blatchford, “The victims are multiplying,” Toronto Sun 6 June 1995: p. 5.

Kristen was concerned that her long nails might tear the other woman, another time, still with the vacuus [sic] Homolka, Kristen said, "I don't want to hurt you "

Throughout, her mind was racing as fast as her pulse. Smart, smart girl that she was, she tried everything. She tried to make herself human for Bernardo, asking him, early on, what time it was and then saying, "My mom's going to be worried." When that didn't work, she tried making him human, tried minimizing the perversity of him with her direct cheerfulness (warning him, when he was taping her on the toilet, as though there was nothing weird in that, "I'm going to pee over you")¹⁶⁶

Blatchford also commented on the strength shown by the victims' families, and complimented the daughters without making them martyrs: "Average girls, from average families, but as this trial has surely shown us, average can be resolute, and resilient, and utterly magnificent."¹⁶⁷

DiManno's coverage did not include opinions about the victims' role in the justice system. (At least, no such articles were published. One must keep in mind that on a couple of occasions, DiManno's columns were killed.) Some of her columns did, of course, portray the victims and their families, and like Blatchford, her point of view was sympathetic.¹⁶⁸ For example, she described Mahaffy's mother as she sat in court, listening to Bernardo assault her daughter. "Debbie Mahaffy appeared like Michelangelo's *Pieta*, probably the most eloquent depiction of sorrow. With one white-knuckled fist pressed

¹⁶⁶Blatchford, "The victims are multiplying."

¹⁶⁷Christie Blatchford, "No cheers, just more tears," Toronto Sun 2 Sept. 1995. p A5

¹⁶⁸Cheney's columns are not relevant in this discussion, as he covered the trial only while Bernardo was on the stand, and his columns focused on the accused killer

against her heart. Chin lowered into her chest, eyes downcast. As pale as marble”¹⁶⁹

News reports tended to be less colorful, but they still recognized the victims’ and families’ pain. Makin wrote that when the videotape of Leslie Mahaffy’s torture was heard for the first time during the trial, “Leslie’s mother sat and listened in a state of what appeared to be almost paralytic grief”¹⁷⁰. Another report, in the Star, began as follows: “The anguished screams of Kristen French jolted spectators yesterday as a videotape of her last recorded words was played to a packed courtroom.”¹⁷¹ Such observations were common in news reports, but it is difficult to determine whether they revealed any personal biases on the part of the reporters. Rather, one could argue that the reporters were simply doing their job, acting as observers in the courtroom, and throwing in some emotive phrases to try to make the stories more compelling.

Columns, however, are supposed to reflect journalists’ personal biases. Scholars, arguing that liberal journalists view deviancy as a matter of perspective, could say that the columns leaned to the right. After all, they showed obvious sympathy for the victims, and thus, indicated the perpetrator was wrong to commit his crimes. Such an assertion would be pushing the labelling theory to the extreme, however, as one would be hard-pressed to find a person, in any society, who would believe Mahaffy’s and French’s rapes and

¹⁶⁹Rosie DiManno, “A descent into a place beyond tears,” Toronto Star 3 June 1995: p. A6.

¹⁷⁰Kirk Makin, “Mahaffy begs for freedom on tape: ‘I’m judging you right now,’ Bernardo tells tormented teen-ager,” Globe and Mail [Toronto] 3 June 1995: p. A1.

¹⁷¹John Duncanson and Nick Pron, “Teen’s screams jolt spectators: Courtroom hears final French tape,” Toronto Star 7 June 1995: p. A1.

murders were acceptable. Rather, one would be on safer territory arguing that the media acted conservatively and promoted the status quo by reducing the victims to virgins, who were desecrated by monsters. If this portrayal occurred, then one could argue that the media absolved society of any responsibility for creating Bernardo.

The factor of bureaucracy limited how the media could portray the victims. Journalists were confined to the courtroom day after day, with the task of reporting that which they heard, or observed, while the trial was in session. Thus, articles included the victims' terrifying experiences and their parents' reactions to the evidence, but the articles generally lacked insight into who the girls were. There were exceptions. In an earlier chapter, I commented that the newspapers shared the news value of emotion, which led them to include Donna French's testimony. Her evidence added little to that which was known about her daughter's abduction, so that critics, such as Davey, could assert that the press sensationalized a "non-event". In his book, Davey argued that the media, trying to make news more entertaining, had begun using techniques such as giving more space to crimes, accidents and fires and less to politics and the economy. "A darker aspect of the media's coverage, however, was their repeated slipping past the mere reporting of information, or investigation of purported leads, to the reporting of non-events in emotional terms that seemed designed far more to stir the feelings of readers than to convey information."¹⁷² Yet one could argue that Donna French's testimony gave journalists a rare opportunity to provide a portrait of her daughter as a multi-dimensional person, not just a virginal victim.

¹⁷²Davey, p. 18.

Mrs French said her daughter--an honours student, a "social butterfly" and an avid skater and rower--was always punctual and considerate. Her unexplained lateness was entirely out of character.¹⁷³

The family had been preparing for the fall wedding of a relative at the time, and French was going to be a bridesmaid for her cousin... [Donna] French said she knew something had happened on that rainy Thursday afternoon on April 16 because her daughter hadn't let her dog, Sasha, out of its backyard pen. It was a daily routine that her daughter did after returning home from school....¹⁷⁴

Despite a demanding athletic schedule that included competitive figure skating and rowing, Kristen also had time for her boyfriend, Elton Wade, she told court.

The day she went missing, Kristen was wearing a charm given to her by Wade inscribed: Yesterday, Today and Forever.¹⁷⁵

The articles helped penetrate the virgin's shroud and let readers see French as a normal teenager. She was considerate and had ambitions and dreams, but she also had daily routines and excitements (such as being a bridesmaid) that were common for a girl her age.

Articles rarely included such examinations of the victims' characters. Instead, the articles recounted each day's testimony, which tended to involve what the "schoolgirls" went through, but not who the schoolgirls were. Journalists who wanted to go beyond the trial's evidence to interview people outside of court faced the threat of contempt charges. The press, however, did report on a weekly vigil organized to remember the victims. (Tammy Homolka was recognized along with Mahaffy and French.) The vigil brings to

¹⁷³Makin, "Woman saw struggle in church lot."

¹⁷⁴Duncanson and Pron, "Bernardo: How Tammy Lyn died," p. A8.

¹⁷⁵Burnside and Cairns, "A mother's anguish."

mind a criticism raised by Davey. He wrote that after French's body was found, journalists actively participated in the process of making French a martyr, by reporting tributes at her grave and a memorial dedicated to her in St. Catharines.¹⁷⁶ Whether this criticism was well-founded, such martyrdom did not appear in the reports on the weekly vigil. Instead, a story in the Star involved a discussion of violence, and concluded with a quotation from an unofficial source, the mother of a young woman murdered four years earlier.¹⁷⁷ "[Priscilla de Villiers] said that, although the vigil is in memory of the three young girls, 'this does not mean that any victim of violence across the country is not of equal importance and equal concern.'"¹⁷⁸

The discussion of violence broadened when a reporter quoted Mahaffy's mother complaining that the vigil should honor all victims, not just her daughter and the two other teenagers who suffered at the hands of Bernardo and Homolka. (Debbie Mahaffy also expressed concern that the weekly event could cause a mistrial. Thus, the influence of bureaucracy resurfaces.) De Villiers responded to the complaint in a way that pointed to the extensiveness of violence in Canadian society. "'It's very hard to focus on endless, nameless, faceless people,'" said de Villiers.¹⁷⁹ While the issue of violence was not

¹⁷⁶Davey, pp. 34-6.

¹⁷⁷Priscilla de Villiers had an official role as the founder of CAVEAT, a victims' group. However, she qualified as an unofficial source, as she was outside the bureaucracy of the legal system.

¹⁷⁸Cal Millar, "50 turn out for memorial vigil in park," Toronto Star 2 June 1995 p. A8.

¹⁷⁹Canadian Press, "Mahaffy's mom wants all victims honored," Toronto Star 5 June 1995: p. A8.

explored in great depth, the press reported that Tammy Homolka, Mahaffy and French were not alone--countless others across Canada had suffered similar violence.

Columnists who were not assigned to the "Bernardo beat" occasionally contributed to the discussion about victims. They raised issues such as how the videotapes were valuable because they destroyed any myths that women like to be raped (to learn about sex) or that rape is about sex, not violence and degradation.

Hard as it may be for us to know the tapes exist, we must force ourselves to remember that the only reason they do is because the acts perpetrated on those young women actually happened. And acts of similar violence and depravity are carried out in countless rapes each and every day.¹⁸⁰

This opinion piece, written by an editor at the Globe and appearing on the paper's "Facts & Arguments" page, elicited a harsh response from one reader. He wrote a letter criticizing the author, Bettyanne Track, for saying that other women regularly experience similar attacks. "The ordeal of these young women [Mahaffy and French] appalls [sic] us and is a grossly inappropriate subject for distorted gender politics."¹⁸¹ Two others, however, wrote to commend Track. One complimented her for showing how the horrific tapes had value, and the other (a doctor who worked at a women's health centre) thanked her for shattering the myth that rape is about sex. "Seeing Ms. Track's article does far

¹⁸⁰Bettyanne Track, "Rape-watching loses its glamour," Globe and Mail [Toronto] 13 June 1995: p. A18.

¹⁸¹David Blick, letter to editor, "Bernardo trial tapes," Globe and Mail [Toronto] 20 June 1995: p. A14.

more than sell newspapers; it educates the public."¹⁸²

Another column in the Globe failed to see any value in the story of how the teenagers were violated. Margaret Wenté's article, titled "Slaughter of the innocents," proclaimed that some stories, such as the tragic tale of O.J. Simpson and his ex-wife, made sense because of themes of "obsessive jealousy, betrayal and revenge... But this story makes no sense at all. It has no moral, no comfort, no lessons to teach, not a shred of redemption. The murders of Kristen and Leslie, by whatever hands, however they came about, were purely evil."¹⁸³ Wenté's article dismissed further discussion, yet it aided this discussion by inciting others to respond. A reader wrote a letter that said an important lesson could be learned from the Bernardo story: that the violent assaults inflicted upon the teens were not isolated incidents. "Violence against women pervades the very fabric of our society. The moral of this story is that we all need to engage in the fight to end violence against women and that we need to do so now."¹⁸⁴

Columnists, then, and the responses they evoked, contributed to the discussion of how society condones men's violence against women. Following Benedict's writing, this

¹⁸²Iris S. Gorfinkel, letter to editor, "Bernardo trial tapes," Globe and Mail [Toronto] 20 June 1995: p. A14.

¹⁸³Margaret Wenté, "Slaughter of the innocents," Globe and Mail [Toronto] 20 May 1995: p. D7.

¹⁸⁴Jillian Boyd, letter to editor, "Ending the violence," Globe and Mail [Toronto] 3 June 1995: p. D7.

Another columnist, Rick Salutin, also commented on Wenté's article. In trying to make sense of the trial, Salutin turned to G.W.F. Hegel. The German philosopher wrote about master-slave relationships. Salutin's column will be considered in the chapter examining how the media coverage portrayed Bernardo.

discussion attacked the status quo, since the accepted violence stemmed from traditional gender roles in which the male is aggressive and the female is passive. A columnist also criticized people's (including journalists') readiness to blame the victim for apparently breaching her gender role. The conservative cultural concept of the innocence of youth emerged here, as girls who transgressed their gender role were somehow deemed responsible when their innocence was tarnished. Heather Bird, writing for the Sun, reproved reporters and columnists for providing information that questioned the victims' motives. For example, reports informed readers that Mahaffy stayed out late at night and did not obey her parents. "We come by this knowledge honestly but what hangs, unspoken, is if she had been compliant, done what she was told, had been a good girl, she would not have been in that place at the wrong time."¹⁸⁵ The teenagers deserved respect, but instead they received blame, and Bird wondered if people would be able to recognize this problem and learn from it.

Benedict noted that putting the blame on victims leads to the stereotype of vamp. News articles had the potential to foster this stereotype, as they reported Mahaffy's troubles with her parents and how she broke her curfew the night she was abducted. (She had been at an informal wake for a friend.) These details were revealed near the beginning of the trial, when the Crown was establishing the facts of the case. Witnesses included Amanda Carpino, whom Mahaffy phoned just before she disappeared. Mahaffy told her she and Martin McSweeney, a 15-year-old who had walked her home, had kissed.

¹⁸⁵Heather Bird, "Just who's on trial here?" Toronto Sun 19 Aug. 1995: p. 13 (Comment).

McSweeney also testified, and the defence cross-examined him as to whether he had smelled alcohol on Mahaffy's breath when he kissed her. The young man said they had not kissed. This evidence appeared innocuous, but by publishing it, the press gave readers an opportunity to blame Mahaffy for her abduction. After all, she had been out late at night, drinking and possibly kissing (behavior that could be seen as making her "loose").¹⁸⁶

The columns, however, refuted the label of vamp. DiManno's article that day told readers that Mahaffy had several aspects to her emerging character, including friendliness, a good sense of humor and a desire to cheer others. She was also not a person to take chances. DiManno referred to the defence's cross-examination of McSweeney, and in her typical style, did not explicitly criticize the defence for trying to throw Mahaffy's character into doubt. Rather, DiManno phrased her idea by saying that Mahaffy was a kind, good person, yet the defence lawyer wanted to know whether Mahaffy drank beer or kissed McSweeney that night.¹⁸⁷ Blatchford's column did not address the concern that Mahaffy could be branded a vamp. Instead, she cast the possible kiss in a different light: "In the last conversation Amanda had with her friend that morning, Leslie told her she and Martin had kissed; I hope so. It is a comfort to think that before the horror that befell her, there were tender teenage kisses and the arms of a gentle young man around her."¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶Makin, "Mahaffy found house locked, court told," p. A8; Pron and Duncanson, "Tracing Mahaffy's last steps," p. A8.

¹⁸⁷Rosie DiManno, "The girl who was on the threshold of safety," Toronto Star 24 May 1995: p. A8.

¹⁸⁸Christie Blatchford, "So many 'ifs' for Leslie: Parents endure courtroom stares," Toronto Sun 24 May 1995: p. 5.

Columnists, then, countered the image that Mahaffy might have been a vamp. French's image was never in danger of such stereotyping, as she was immediately seen as a "good girl" snatched from a church parking lot in the middle of the afternoon. Rather, the danger was that her complexity could be hidden by the stereotype of the virgin. All the newspapers frequently labelled her a schoolgirl. (Interestingly, Mahaffy was also called this. When news reports were not setting out her behavior in a way that implied she was a vamp, they used the easy cliché of schoolgirl.) Often, news reports offered no other details to describe French or Mahaffy. The word corresponds to the stereotype of virgin, since a schoolgirl is supposedly a young, innocent girl. In news reports, the image was predominant. Columnists regularly covering the trial did not use the term, although Rosie DiManno did refer to Tammy Homolka as Karla's "baby sister" on a number of occasions. The phrase promoted the view of Tammy as an innocent virgin, but one could also argue that it was an example of how journalists try to adopt the mode of address of their audience. "Baby sister" and "baby brother" are colloquial phrases that many people use when describing their younger siblings. Blatchford tended to use another phrase, which also belonged to the reader's everyday language, but did less to evoke the stereotype. She referred to Tammy as Homolka's "kid sister".¹⁸⁹

Still, the term "schoolgirl" appeared in numerous news articles, and there were repercussions. One columnist who did not regularly cover the trial commented that, "It's a quaint word, usually written rather than spoken. Yet from what teachers tell me, it

¹⁸⁹Blatchford did use the term "baby sister" in at least one column, though, dated 8 June 1995.

resonates throughout the schools as children try to cope with the fact that they could have been--or can be--victims."¹⁹⁰ The column pointed out that teenagers recognized the stereotypes applied to Mahaffy and French. "High-school teachers tell me that girls identify with either good-girl Kristen or the more rebellious Leslie, yet know there's no difference, because neither survived."¹⁹¹ A feature writer also commented on the wide-ranging effect of using the word "schoolgirl". "Indeed, when the media describe the victims as 'schoolgirls,' suddenly 'every schoolgirl, whether she's 5 or 16, can identify. It places this tragedy right in the reality of any child,' says media analyst Jill Golick of the Canadian Alliance for children [sic] and Television."¹⁹²

We see that not only did the stereotype mask the personalities of Mahaffy and French, supporting the moral tale of flat characters who were ravaged by a monster, it masked the individual identities of all girls attending school. This created widespread fear that all girls were vulnerable, because monsters could invade society and attack randomly. The article in the Star that quoted Golick, however, attempted to combat this fear, by giving parents advice on how to help their kids cope with the trial. Psychologists made recommendations that involved parents talking to their kids, in ways which did not evoke images of virgins and monsters. "'Assure children that this sort of crime is not normal and not sanctioned.' Reassure them that the world is a good place overall, but there are some

¹⁹⁰Lesley Krueger, "Helplessness and fear as the trial progresses," Globe and Mail [Toronto] 16 June 1995: p. A26.

¹⁹¹Krueger, "Helplessness and fear as the trial progresses."

¹⁹²Louise Brown, "Help kids cope with Bernardo trial details," Toronto Star 6 June 1995: p. C1.

people who cause others harm, which is why we have safety rules we must always remember."¹⁹³ Thus, while the pervasive stereotype of the schoolgirl (or virgin) engendered fear, it also encouraged discussion, and the media presented tips for helping parents educate their children about potential harm and how to protect themselves.

In conclusion, the columnists' personal biases did not appear to influence them to support the status quo; their articles did not create martyred victims who played opposite to monsters living outside society. (Blatchford did, however, exhibit her conservative bias in favor of the traditional court system.) The factor of bureaucracy restricted the media's ability to delve into the personalities of the victims, but journalists still covered an event (the vigil) outside of court, which caused discussion about the widespread problem of violence against women. Finally, the cultural concept of the innocence of youth led some news reports to imply that the victims were responsible for the loss of that innocence, but columnists refuted this idea. They also avoided the stereotype so prevalent in news reports, of the schoolgirl (or virgin), although they pushed the limits by describing Tammy Homolka as a "baby sister" or "kid sister". They would have been safer, perhaps, in describing her as Karla Homolka's younger or youngest sister, but such phrases are less colloquial, and journalists may have been considering their audience's mode of address when constructing their stories. Overall, news reports perpetuated the one-dimensional image of virgin, but a few news reports and columns (written by journalists covering the trial every day or just once) expanded that image to portray the victims as young women with many sides to their personalities.

¹⁹³Brown, "Help kids cope with Bernardo trial details."

Chapter Five

When Ms. Homolka enters the witness box today to testify against Mr. Bernardo, charged with the murder of two teen-age girls, the prosecution will portray her as...a feckless woman who was battered and blackmailed into some of the most chilling acts in living memory. To her in-laws, Ms. Homolka was "a slut." And the view of Mr. Bernardo's defence team is neatly summed up in a comment by one former lawyer that she is "the Devil." How the public views the 24-year-old veterinary assistant is less clear. For most, she has remained an enduring mystery through three years of ceaseless rumour and innuendo.¹⁹⁴

Bernardo's trial offered journalists an opportunity to explore the character of a woman they had been unable to write about until that time. A publicity ban on evidence at Homolka's trial prevented the media from trying to explain Bernardo's ex-wife. When the Crown gave its opening address, it presented, for the first time, its official view of Homolka and her role in the crimes. In this chapter, I will examine whether the factors of journalists' personal biases, bureaucracy and cultural concepts affected the way the press portrayed Homolka during the trial, so that it constructed news that supported the status quo.

Before Homolka took the stand, journalists had a window, if not to her soul, then certainly to her body. Videotapes revealed Bernardo's then-fiancée, only partly clad, as she drugged and sexually assaulted her sister. They revealed her having sex with Bernardo while pretending to be Tammy, dead from the aforesaid assault. They revealed her sexually assaulting Mahaffy, French, and an unconscious young woman known as Jane

¹⁹⁴Makin, "Testimony will finally reveal the real Karla Homolka," p. A1.

Doe. They revealed her having sex with Bernardo and a prostitute, stripping for her then-husband, and sometimes, they revealed how she looked and acted while she was wearing clothes. Journalists and spectators were not privy to all these visual scenes; they were restricted to hearing the tapes involving victims. The other tapes, however, were played on the public monitors, and articles stated that the tapes' impact was great. For example, the Globe published a story by Makin, which noted, "While none of the videotaped scenes yesterday involved any hint of violence, spectators left the court reeling from the stunningly graphic sex scenes between Mr. Bernardo and Ms. Homolka."¹⁹⁵

Journalists' personal biases against Homolka emerged early on in the trial, with the playing of the videotapes. Blatchford and DiManno wrote columns that voiced their opinion that Homolka alone was to blame for her crimes. In other words, the individual, not society, had to take responsibility. Furthermore, Homolka could not shift the blame to another individual, Bernardo. After only the ninth day of the trial, which lasted three months, Blatchford wrote a column that indicated her belief in the conservative value of individual responsibility. The column said that Bernardo directed his then-fiancée in assaulting Tammy, but Homolka had a choice in the matter: "it was clear that Karla Homolka tried to draw a line in the sand, and that she drew it, unsuccessfully, at performing oral sex on her sister."¹⁹⁶ The next day, DiManno commented on another videotaped scene, in which Homolka masqueraded as Tammy. The Crown, in its opening

¹⁹⁵Kirk Makin, "Tape refers to previous abduction: Homolka offers to lure '50' girls," Globe and Mail [Toronto] 2 June 1995: p. A8.

¹⁹⁶Christie Blatchford, "Sex, lies and videotape: Two different Bernardos on trial," Toronto Sun 1 June 1995: p. 5.

address, had asserted that Homolka followed Bernardo's instructions when she appeared on videotape, but DiManno's column showed she did not believe this.

She aimed to please, did Homolka. It is she who initiates most of the sexual conduct, telling Bernardo to move this way and that, stand up, turn around. She surprises him with Tammy's underwear. She rubs a rose along his body and suggests they later lay it on Tammy's grave. Yes, she licks his feet. She says, over and over, "You are the king." But these are voluntary acts, voluntary pronouncements.¹⁹⁷

The columnists' personal, conservative bias in favor of individual responsibility did not waver when Homolka took the stand. One column that DiManno wrote mocked Homolka's "mantra"--that her reason for doing anything was that "'He told me to.'"¹⁹⁸ Blatchford's column that day asserted that Homolka, not Bernardo, was to blame for her subjugation. Right from the start of their relationship, she bowed to him, sending him greeting cards with sexual messages that demeaned herself. Blatchford wrote that Homolka was willingly fulfilling her half of a deal. Homolka would be Bernardo's sexual playtoy; in return, he would spend money on her and treat her like a lady in front of others.

In truth, she had a philosophy, and as it was then, so it is now: Deal, hand over control of your life to a man, absolve yourself of responsibility so that when the day of reckoning arrives, and they come to take your measure, they will find, as someone once said, "There's no there, there." It worked with Paul Bernardo. It worked with Michael Code and Murray Segal [government and Crown officials who arranged

¹⁹⁷DiManno, "So tedious, these tapes, played not once, but twice."

¹⁹⁸Rosie DiManno, "Karla's mantra: He was calling all the shots," Toronto Star 20 June 1995: p. A9.

Homolka's plea bargain] and Ray Houlahan ¹⁹⁹

We see that Blatchford's column showed a personal bias in favor of the conservative value of individual responsibility. It also included an attack on the traditional power structure, however. Blatchford criticized the provincial government and Crown for the plea bargain they made with Homolka. The columnist could see some rationale behind the bargain; police had not found videotapes of Mahaffy's and French's assaults during an extensive search of the couple's house. (Bernardo's original defence lawyer eventually turned the tapes over to the Crown, and then quit the case.) Thus, Homolka's testimony was important in prosecuting Bernardo. Blatchford was not prepared to excuse the officials, though, questioning why they had "sweetened" the deal by deciding they would not lay charges against Homolka in relation to the drugging and sexual assault of Jane Doe. "Only when we have a proper accounting of the deals--from their architects, assistant deputy minister Michael Code and Crown law office director Murray Segal--will we find out what forces drove the pacts."²⁰⁰ DiManno also criticized the deal, writing that the punishment did not fit the crimes.²⁰¹ She wondered whether the deal could be broken, and Homolka could be charged with Doe's assault, as well as with charges such as the

¹⁹⁹Christie Blatchford, "Vacuous and greedy, Homolka reveals her pathetic philosophy," Toronto Sun 20 June 1995: p. 5.

²⁰⁰Christie Blatchford, "Homolka deal must be explained," Toronto Sun 10 June 1995: p. 4.

²⁰¹Rosie DiManno, "How a client found a lawyer--and a deal," Toronto Star 30 June 1995: p. A14.

unlawful confinement and sexual assaults of Mahaffy and French.²⁰²

Columnists, then, questioned the status quo, by pushing legal officials to explain their conduct, but also supported the status quo, by promoting the belief that individuals are responsible for their own actions. It is more difficult to identify personal biases in news reports, as the writers are not explicitly stating their opinions. However, one may see glimpses of how personal biases affected the news coverage. For example, an article Makin wrote indicated that he believed in individual responsibility. Makin recognized Homolka had a will and was capable of exercising it. He quoted Homolka's description of the abuse she suffered at Bernardo's hands, but provided the following context: "Still, there were many flashes of independence in her character. Twice, for example, Ms Homolka admitted she lied to her parents about her whereabouts so she and Mr. Bernardo could have sex-filled holidays in Florida or his parents' home in Scarborough."²⁰³

One could also spot personal biases by considering whether journalists used the conjunction "and". For example, reports that referred to "Bernardo and Homolka's house" could indicate that the journalists believed Homolka had an equal role in the crimes, which took place in the dwelling. On June 14, a news report in the Star used the

²⁰²Rosie DiManno, "So just how ironclad is Homolka's deal?" Toronto Star 12 July 1995: p. A8.

Homolka, as mentioned in an earlier chapter, was charged and found guilty of only two counts of manslaughter, in the deaths of Mahaffy and French. (Tammy's death was taken into account during sentencing. Before Homolka's role in her sister's death was revealed, Homolka's lawyer was negotiating a plea bargain that would have seen Homolka receive a sentence of 10 years. When Tammy's death was figured into the sentence, an extra two years was added, for a sentence of 12 years.)

²⁰³Makin, "Homolka describes Bernardo beatings," p. A4.

phrase "Bernardo's home".²⁰⁴ So did the news report in the Sun.²⁰⁵ Blatchford's column that day, however, fulfilled the expectation that she had a personal bias favoring individual responsibility, by referring to "the marital home of Bernardo and his then-wife, Karla Homolka," and "the Bernardo-Homolka home".²⁰⁶ This method of determining biases is dangerous, though, because one may read more into a conjunction than it is worth. News reporters, working under pressures of time and space, wrote quickly and likely gave no thought to the connotations of a simple word such as "and". Thus, when it comes to news reports, one is safer analyzing whether the influence of bureaucracy affected coverage.

Before Bernardo's trial began, the most obvious bureaucratic influence was that of the publication ban on the evidence given at Homolka's trial in July 1993. As mentioned earlier, the ban kept journalists from reporting on the details of the trial, including Homolka's plea bargain. The ban ceased to be an influence, however, when Bernardo's trial began. Journalists were free to report evidence and testimony about Homolka's role in the crimes, and they were also able to provide full details of her plea bargain. The bureaucracy of the court system could have prevented this full disclosure, since the rule of attorney-client privilege allowed Homolka to keep secret her correspondence with her lawyer.

²⁰⁴John Duncanson and Jim Rankin, "Jury told of search that failed to uncover videotape evidence: Walls ripped out, floors excavated without finding key evidence," Toronto Star 14 June 1995: p. A8.

²⁰⁵Alan Cairns and Scott Burnside, "Hunt missed videotapes: Cops turned Bernardo house upside down," Toronto Sun 14 June 1995: p. 5.

²⁰⁶Christie Blatchford, "Trial secrecy fails us all," Toronto Sun 14 June 1995: p. 5.

She waived this privilege, however, when she took the stand, and the defence lawyer questioned her about a letter she wrote to her lawyer after she had gone to prison. The letter contained her admission that Bernardo had raped Jane Doe. Homolka wrote that she had just begun remembering parts of the assault, and she was worried that she had been involved, as well. Reporters quoted her letter: "What if it was me with (Jane Doe)? Why didn't I remember all of this when they (officers) first questioned me? I have to tell them but what if they nail me for this too? Can you do something to make sure they don't?"²⁰⁷ The bureaucracy of the courts had the power to keep this information secret. Because Homolka agreed to waive her right to attorney-client privilege, however, journalists were able to hear and report it, consequently showing that Homolka may not have been a helpless victim. She acted in her own self-interest by trying to avoid getting "nailed".

Other bureaucratic influences came into play during the trial. For example, before Homolka took the witness stand, journalists had no way of establishing direct contact with the woman. Instead, they had to rely on videotapes to judge her character. Furthermore, they had to rely on the soundtrack because of the publication ban against viewing the tapes, which was imposed during Bernardo's trial. When she began testifying, she answered the Crown's questions first, followed by those posed by the defence. Thus, during the nine days that the Crown spent examining its star witness, Homolka was able to

²⁰⁷Nick Pron, John Duncanson and Jim Rankin, "Lawyer likens home to 'a Venus's-flytrap,'" *Toronto Star* 8 July 1995: p. A11.

supply her point of view. Newspapers often published headlines that provided the excuse or explanation of the day:

Homolka describes Bernardo beatings: Five-year sex slave to 'magnetic' man²⁰⁸

Homolka says she felt blackmailed: Secret of her role in sister's death kept her tied to Bernardo, she testifies²⁰⁹

Jury told of 'nightly terrorist attacks' Bernardo threatened to spring on wife²¹⁰

I knew French was doomed: But Homolka too terrified to free kidnapped teenager²¹¹

The headlines introduced stories that, lacking an alternative viewpoint, also portrayed Homolka as a victim. For example, on June 28, a story in the Sun gave Homolka an opportunity to express her victimhood. That day, the newspaper's main story related Homolka's evidence about killing French and disposing of her body. A second story focused on Homolka's claim that she followed Bernardo's instructions when he videotaped her. (The Sun tended to separate each day's testimony into a number of stories. The Globe and the Star, in contrast, often published a single story.) The second story, titled "Making the director happy," began as follows: "In a dimmed courtroom, Karla Homolka rubbed at her eyes and denied she ever took pleasure in the repeated

²⁰⁸Globe and Mail [Toronto] 20 June 1995: p. A1.

²⁰⁹Globe and Mail [Toronto] 21 June 1995: p. A1.

²¹⁰Toronto Star 21 June 1995: p. A8.

²¹¹Toronto Sun 27 June 1995: pp. 4-5.

sexual assaults on Kristen French."²¹² The article included Homolka's assertion that when she operated the camera, gave directions to French, and participated in the sex acts herself, she was only trying to please Bernardo.

"I was trying to make Paul happy. Trying to make a good videotape," Homolka explained. "I felt very sickened and repulsed by everything." Despite her obvious involvement, Homolka said Bernardo directed all of the scenarios. Often there are camera breaks, "and during those times more instructions were given...what to do next," Homolka said.²¹³

Unable to include Bernardo's point of view at this point in the trial, reports often focused on Homolka's version of events and may have helped cement it in the minds of readers.

Columnists, however, were less limited by the bureaucratic influence of the order of questioning. They had only Homolka's story to listen to, but could interpret it and cast doubt on its veracity. As discussed earlier, they believed that Homolka was able to exercise her will (just like any other individual), and did so, for example, when she refused to free French. (Homolka had been alone with the teenager twice, when Bernardo left the house to pick up fast food and videotaped movies.) When it was Rosen's turn to question Homolka, the columnists continued their attack on her. DiManno pointed out that Homolka's story of victimhood lost credibility because she demonstrated her strong will when she sparred with Rosen. "She did not submit meekly to Rosen. She did not crack. She just wasn't a pushover. Not at all like the girl she claims to have been as Mrs. Paul

²¹²Scott Burnside and Alan Cairns, "Making the director happy," Toronto Sun 28 June 1995: p. 40.

²¹³Burnside and Cairns, "Making the director happy."

Bernardo."²¹⁴ Blatchford noted that Homolka was smart (tests showed she was more intelligent than 98 per cent of the population), and when she first met Bernardo, she had family and friends to support her--unlike many women who become involved in abusive relationships.

Yet, she is presenting herself, at this trial, as one of them, as a victim who was tricked and charmed, coerced and cajoled, bullied and beaten and battered if not senseless, then into a moral vacuum. This is the prosecution's theory of the case--Paul Bernardo as the evil puppeteer, his soft-skinned hand figuratively, and often, literally, up Karla Homolka's dress, pulling her strings....²¹⁵

Blatchford dismissed this theory, saying that Homolka showed her sass by standing up to Rosen.

The cross-examination enabled news reporters to shift their articles' focus from Homolka's version of events to Rosen's accusations that she was more involved in the crimes than she admitted. Homolka's rebuttals usually followed close behind the accusations. The bureaucracy of the newspaper became apparent here, as journalists turned to a new perspective from an official source (Rosen, a recognized court official) to set the frame of their articles. However, journalists also had to give special attention to Homolka's replies, since she was a major player in the trial. Indeed, one could see her as an official source, because she was a sworn witness. With Rosen's and Homolka's versions of events available, journalists tried to balance them in each story. A more

²¹⁴Rosie DiManno, "A breathtaking, relentless cross-examination," Toronto Star 5 July 1995: p. A8.

²¹⁵Christie Blatchford, "Her new pugnacity is puzzling," Toronto Sun 5 July 1995: p. 5.

complete picture of Homolka and her role in the crimes emerged.

The bureaucracy of the court system affected the media's portrayal of Homolka in another way; the judge ruled that certain evidence was admissible, while other evidence was not, thereby restricting that which the journalists could report. For example, the judge decided that the Crown could examine experts on battered-wife syndrome (also known as battered-woman syndrome) to assess Homolka's evidence, but all questions had to be couched in terms of the hypothetical. In other words, the experts could not refer to Homolka. They had to restrict their answers to how a woman might be expected to behave if she had experiences similar to those Homolka had described.²¹⁶

In allowing the testimony, the judge gave journalists an opportunity to report on the syndrome. Indeed, one could say that the judge obliged the journalists to report on it, since their job was to report evidence presented in court. (In particular, the Star was obliged to include the testimony, because the managers had made a policy that news reporters would attempt to provide a chronological report of each day's events, with the goal of making readers feel as if they had been in court that day.) Thus, newspapers published articles that educated readers about the syndrome. The Sun even published an expert's list of 10 myths and corresponding facts about abusive relationships. (For example, the list included the myth that an abused woman can leave the relationship, especially if the abuser is away or lives in another city. The fact was that the woman,

²¹⁶Kirk Makin, "Judge says Bernardo trial straying from main issue: Battered women's syndrome explored in testimony," Globe and Mail [Toronto] 4 Aug. 1995: p A1.

afraid of her abuser or under his control, feels psychologically chained to him.)²¹⁷

One could contend that the bureaucracy of the court system influenced the media to question the status quo, in that it encouraged newspapers to include information about a syndrome recognized by the courts only in recent years. The media expanded the discussion about violence against women, violence which used to be ignored, or dismissed, because women (it was thought) should be able to walk away from men who beat them. On the other hand, one could contend that the court influenced the media to disregard an explanation for Homolka's behavior. The judge ruled that the expert testimony had to be restricted to hypothetical situations. The connection to Homolka was obvious, however, and one would be insulting most readers in saying that they were unable to consider whether she was a battered wife. Even the judge recognized the difficulty of separating the hypothetical from the experiences described by Homolka. "Perhaps, in many ways, it is a difference without a distinction," he conceded.²¹⁸

We see that bureaucracy influenced the media, in that the court restricted newspapers' ability to present a complete picture of Homolka. During the trial, attorney-client privilege threatened to limit information available to the press, a publication ban on viewing the tapes kept journalists from describing how Homolka looked while she acted, and the order of questioning encouraged them to privilege her viewpoint. The potential existed for the media to portray Homolka as a helpless victim, but Homolka waived her

²¹⁷Scott Burnside and Alan Cairns, "The syndrome: Separating fact from myth," Toronto Sun 4 Aug. 1995: p. 26.

²¹⁸Makin, "Judge says Bernardo trial straying from main issue," p. A1.

privilege, and columnists threw doubt on her story. In his ruling regarding battered-wife syndrome, the judge also discouraged journalists from constructing news that presented the possibility that Homolka truly was abused. Most readers would be capable of making the mental leap between the hypothetical and the specific, however, to consider the expert testimony in light of the evidence provided by Homolka. The press's examination of battered-wife syndrome also expanded the discussion; experts say many women are abused by their partners, but people in society dismiss the problem because of myths, such as that the women can leave their relationships if they so choose. We see that newspapers were able to sidestep some bureaucratic influences to portray Homolka. Ultimately, though, the picture will never be complete, because of another bureaucratic influence. Her plea bargain, crafted by officials in the legal system, forbids her from ever discussing the crimes with the media.²¹⁹

One can also find evidence that the factor of cultural concepts affected how the media portrayed Homolka. As discussed in an earlier chapter, the concept of the fundamental opposition and relationship of male and female stems from traditional, conservative gender roles. Women are supposed to be passive, doing as men say. Men, as the aggressors, have a responsibility to protect the weaker sex. If a woman breaches her role and acts aggressively, people may see her as under the control of a man, and blame him. The woman may be stereotyped as a helpless victim. Conversely, she may be stereotyped as an evil woman, because proper women would never intentionally hurt others, particularly other females.

²¹⁹"Full text of Homolka's plea-bargain," Toronto Star 30 June 1995: p. A15.

During the early part of the trial, the concept appeared to influence some journalists to portray Homolka in her traditional gender role. One article in the Sun described the couple as "man and wife".²²⁰ Another article made Homolka seem like a helpless victim:

A hushed court yesterday heard a sobbing Karla Homolka resist Paul Bernardo's repeated commands during the Christmas Eve 1990 rape of her unconscious sister, Tammy.
 "Do it now," Bernardo's voice barks on videotapes shown to the jury in Bernardo's first-degree murder trial.
 "No. No," Karla responds in a hushed voice.
 For the balance of the six-minute, 37-second clip, Homolka quietly whimpers refusal but ultimately complies with graphic commands that she perform a series of sex acts...
 When Bernardo asks if Homolka likes what she is doing, she replies with an obscenity and says it is "disgusting."²²¹

The influence of bureaucracy is apparent, in that journalists were not allowed to see the videotapes, and therefore had to rely on what they heard to describe the scene. The influence of cultural concepts was also at work, however, as journalists used words loaded with meaning to create sympathy for Homolka. For example, Bernardo "barked" at Homolka, rather than instructed her. Homolka "quietly whimpered refusal," rather than said no to his requests. This article is particularly insightful for identifying the influence of the cultural concept, because later evidence showed that journalists could have interpreted the videotaped scene in a completely different way. It turned out that Tammy had been menstruating at the time of the assault; Rosen suggested that Tammy's period, not morals, caused Homolka to balk at having oral sex with her sister.

²²⁰Alan Cairns and Scott Burnside, "Homolka on stand," Toronto Sun 19 June 1995: p. 7.

²²¹Scott Burnside and Alan Cairns, "Jurors see graphic sex attack: Video details final minutes of Tammy's life," Toronto Sun 1 June 1995: p. 4.

The Star and the Sun also fostered the stereotype of Homolka the victim by printing the infamous "raccoon eyes" picture. Bernardo had beaten her shortly before she left him, and photographs taken at a hospital showed her covered in bruises. One photo, a mug shot, displayed her two black eyes. The photos were presented in court, but copies were not distributed to the media. Court artists could make sketches, and the Star published a drawing of the mug shot the next day. It appeared on the front page, underneath a picture of Homolka and her sister Lori, which showed them smiling. (That photo was a still shot taken from a videotape.) The Sun also published a sketch of Homolka's "raccoon eyes." (Journalists used this phrase in conversation, but it originated in testimony. Homolka's mother, Dorothy, said her daughter had looked like a raccoon.) The Sun's drawing was smaller, part of an illustration of a Crown attorney questioning Dorothy. The next day, however, the Sun published the photograph itself. Somehow, Burnside and Cairns had managed to sidestep the bureaucracy of the courts, and acquired a copy of the photo. Homolka's raccoon eyes appeared in color on the front page of the Sun. Indeed, the photo occupied most of the page, and the accompanying headline stated, "Bernardo Did This to Karla: Crown."²²²

Without doubt, Homolka had suffered abuse. The Star and the Sun, however, fostered the stereotype of helpless victim, to the exclusion of other interpretations, by choosing to display the picture so prominently. (The Globe, in contrast, did not publish any illustrations of Homolka's bruises.) In a column, Blatchford noted the power of the photos:

²²²Toronto Sun 31 May 1995: p. 1.

by the time [the pictures] were flashed on the courtroom monitors... we all knew what was coming, but when I saw the pictures, my first thought was, "How on earth are we supposed to see these black eyes when she's wearing sunglasses?" Only moments later, when I realized the sunglasses had no arms, did I understand I was looking at the black eyes [original emphasis].²²³

Blatchford was surprised, but she still questioned Homolka's victim status. She wrote that the trial was just beginning, and Rosen had not had a chance to expand on his theory that Homolka was an equal partner in the crimes.²²⁴ As we have seen, she and DiManno later wrote columns that noted Homolka had a will and knew how to use it. In fact, Blatchford called Homolka and Bernardo a team, and even posited that Homolka may have been the leader. She certainly was not a victim, the columnist asserted.

It is the prosecution's theory that Homolka, convicted in two murders though she might be, is just another girl, by inference just-another-victim. It appears also to be her theory. Yesterday, explaining how Bernardo allegedly "scripted" sex-play dialogue for Leslie and Kristen, she said, "He told all three of us things to say." All three of us victims together, of course, is what she meant, forgetting, as only she can, that at any point down that long and winding road she walked with Bernardo, she could have stopped, and taken the path more travelled.²²⁵

Other columnists, covering the trial just once or sporadically, also dismissed the image of Homolka as a helpless victim. Margaret Wentz of the Globe accused the convicted killer of trying to blame the man in her life. Susan Smith did the same thing, Wentz noted. Smith strapped her two sons into her car and rolled it into a lake, and told

²²³Christie Blatchford, "In this courtroom all bets are off," Toronto Sun 30 May 1995: p. 5.

²²⁴Blatchford, "In this courtroom all bets are off."

²²⁵Christie Blatchford, "Womanhood demeaned," Toronto Sun 23 June 1995: p. 5.

people a black man had abducted them. She later said she did this because her boyfriend had broken up with her, saying he was not ready for the commitment that came with children. Smith's earlier experiences with men had also been disastrous. Her stepfather had molested her and her stormy marriage to the father of her children soon ended in divorce. Wente wrote that the women's excuses let people shift the blame from the individual to society. "These explanations are crafted to appeal to people who believe that if women act badly, it's because they are programmed to win the approval of men."²²⁶ Wente said that social explanations such as this would never be adequate to understand Homolka or Smith. People could ask psychological or legal questions to figure out the women and their crimes, but the final questions were theological, such as whether the women deserve hell.²²⁷

This image of hell evokes the figure of the devil, which corresponds to the stereotype of the evil woman. Instead of creating the stereotype of the helpless victim, the cultural concept of the opposition and relationship of male and female may be used in a moral tale, in which the woman, transgressing her proper gender role, may be seen as evil. The coverage of Homolka during the trial often incorporated the corresponding stereotype of the devil. Wente's column brought to mind the image, but several news reports crystallized it by explicitly labelling her a devil. They quoted defence lawyers who said the Crown had made a deal with the devil, the plea bargain with Homolka. The stereotype

²²⁶Margaret Wente, "Love at all costs," Globe and Mail [Toronto] 15 July 1995: p. D7.

²²⁷Wente, "Love at all costs."

appeared in columns, too. Michele Mandel of the Sun referred to the “deal with the devil,” and said the trial gave people a glimpse of evil. The columnist also quoted an activist fighting violence against women: “‘It’s particularly difficult for women to deal with Karla Homolka...Women aren’t supposed to do these things.’”²²⁸ Cartoons depicted the stereotype as well. For example, a Sun cartoon showed a devil with big horns and a pitchfork talking to a shorter devil with smaller horns. The caption read, “Somebody should tell Karla Homolka nobody gets parole here....”²²⁹

During the trial, the senior editor at a weekly news and entertainment publication was concerned that Homolka was being portrayed as a demon.²³⁰ Susan G. Cole wrote a column that appeared in NOW, published in Toronto. In considering this column, I am stepping beyond the boundaries set for this thesis (those boundaries limited attention to the Globe, Star and Sun), but the column has relevance, because it stirred other commentators to respond. (For example, Wente’s column referred to the article by Cole.) Cole wrote that Homolka was 17 years old and had no known history of violence when she met Bernardo. He was five years older and “a seasoned rapist.” Cole said Homolka’s story of being terrorized was not unique, and she reacted in typical ways, such as by pretending nothing was wrong. Admitting that Homolka went to extremes to please her master, Cole added that among sexual terrorists, Bernardo was unrivalled. Homolka

²²⁸Michele Mandel, “The dark night of the soul: Testimony at Bernardo trial leaves a city heartsick,” Toronto Sun 2 July 1995: p. 5.

²²⁹Phillips, cartoon, Toronto Sun 13 July 1995: p. 10 (Comment).

²³⁰Susan G. Cole, personal interview, 8 March 1996.

believed she had no choice in whether to help Bernardo attack women. "People do degrading things to survive trauma. That doesn't make them equally culpable as the traumatizers."²³¹

In the personal interview with Blatchford, she said that she never called Bernardo a monster, because that could place him outside of society, making people believe he was one of a kind. The same argument can be made for portraying Homolka as a devil; she could appear as a unique, one-dimensional figure, existing in some other world.

Blatchford's columns occasionally bordered on labelling her as a devil or inhuman. For instance, she warned people against thinking that Homolka or Bernardo possessed any genuine human feeling,²³² and said that Homolka was foreign "to us".²³³ She never used the word "devil", but the word "evil" appeared often. In the interview, Blatchford distinguished between evil and monster, saying that Bernardo could be the former without being the latter. The same rule appeared to apply to Homolka; she could be evil but still human. One column elucidated this viewpoint, and greatly expanded the way readers could think about Homolka. The column referred to a magazine article examining Hitler. The author considered the idea of evil as the incomplete. Blatchford took the author's words and applied them to Homolka and Bernardo:

"Evil conceived not as an alien, inhuman otherness, but as a less highly evolved form of humanness." It's a useful definition.

²³¹Susan G. Cole, "Homolka Not Like Bernardo," NOW 13-19 July 1995: p. 11.

²³²Christie Blatchford, "Homolka deal must be explained."

²³³Christie Blatchford, "A heart of cold steel shows itself," Toronto Sun 14 July 1995. p. 5.

Kristen French was a good Catholic girl who was murdered on one of the holiest days of her religious calendar before a piece of furniture called a hope chest; only something human could have written a death script that laden with black irony, that simultaneously destructive both of one person and the symbols she held dear.²³⁴

Thus, Blatchford dismissed the stereotype of the devil, and described the evil woman in terms of someone who is human, and therefore, created within society.

Another columnist was willing to acknowledge that Homolka was not a demon, and may even have been a victim. Rick Salutin, responding to Cole's article, said Homolka could have suffered worse abuse, though. He was concerned that it was becoming too easy for people to claim victim status. Those most deserving of sympathy were becoming lost among the flood of complainants, and the act of claiming victimhood was being cheapened.²³⁵ DiManno also noted there are different degrees of victimhood, and criticized Homolka for comparing her experience to that of French's and Mahaffy's. "She speaks of *her* bruises, which she says were inflicted by Bernardo, in the same way she speaks of Mahaffy's dismemberment. She speaks of the punch to *her* head in the same way she speaks of Bernardo tightening an electrical cord around Mahaffy's neck [original emphasis]."²³⁶ This discussion of victimhood expanded the view of Homolka; she was not a wicked demon from another world, but she also was not the paragon of victimhood. Rather, she was an individual with a free will, who grew up in Canadian society.

²³⁴Christie Blatchford, "Mesmerizing faces of evil," Toronto Sun 28 June 1995: p. 5.

²³⁵Rick Salutin, "Who can not claim victim status?" Globe and Mail [Toronto] 25 Aug. 1995: p. A11.

²³⁶Rosie DiManno, "Homolka testimony has chilling consistency," Toronto Star 23 June 1995: p. A10.

Some articles, recognizing that stereotypes could not explain Homolka, called her an enigma or a mystery. In a column, Blatchford wondered whether it was possible to assess Homolka's character after watching her testify for less than three weeks. All that the columnist could say with certainty was that Homolka loved weddings and was adamant about not being a lesbian. Blatchford stated that evidence, such as the videotape of the couple's wedding rehearsal, showed Homolka doting on her fiancé. "Whatever she says now, whatever she may wish now to believe about her own conduct then, she was mad for, well, if not for him precisely, then for the idea of him, the idea of husband."²³⁷

Homolka, breaking with the goals of her generation, had reverted to the traditional goal of marriage. Blatchford found this baffling, and also could not understand why Homolka was willing to admit to heinous crimes, but refused to give ground to Rosen's suggestions that she enjoyed sex with the female victims.²³⁸ Meanwhile, DiManno called Homolka a mystery. She never seemed sufficiently sorry for, or even aware of, the horrible things she had done. Instead, her testimony showed her to be an "admixture of gossamer and steel." For instance, she assaulted and helped cause the death of her sister, but was then able to talk in 'ipidly about her wedding plans.²³⁹

News articles published after the jury was sequestered tried to further explore Homolka's enigmatic character. Evidence deemed inadmissible at trial surfaced at this

²³⁷Christie Blatchford, "Her search for gold a breath of stale air," Toronto Sun 13 July 1995: p. 5.

²³⁸Blatchford, "Her search for gold a breath of stale air."

²³⁹Rosie DiManno, "Exit Karla Homolka, an infuriating mystery," Toronto Star 15 July 1995: p. A8.

time, and journalists outlined psychiatric evaluations of Homolka. Three psychiatrists working for the Crown felt that Homolka suffered battered-wife syndrome and post-traumatic stress disorder, and was the compliant victim of a sexual sadist. This information had been heard in court only indirectly, as the experts had been restricted to talking about battered wives in general. They were not permitted to refer to Homolka. The Crown's fourth psychiatrist, not called to testify, felt Homolka was a "diagnostic mystery". Angus McDonald's viewpoint appeared at the end of the Sun article, but also in the headline: "The mystery of Karla Homolka: Can abuse alone account for 'moral vacuity' of this killer?"²⁴⁰ McDonald believed that Homolka experienced escalating abuse and intimidation, but this could not fully explain why she acted as she did. An article in the Globe focused on the psychiatrist's findings, including the inconsistency between Homolka's aggressive attitude on the stand and her self-image of a dominated, timid person.²⁴¹

The Star also published a news article that focused on McDonald's report, but the article did more than recite his findings and conclude that she was a mystery. The article was constructed to show Homolka as a woman who mischievously studied battered-wife syndrome and used it to excuse herself. For example, the following passage appeared:

Asked at Bernardo's trial how she felt about being involved in sexual acts and the making of the tapes, Homolka put a tissue to her dry eyes. Her voice cracking, as it had at all the right moments in her testimony,

²⁴⁰Toronto Sun 1 Sept. 1995: pp. 4-5 (Special section).

²⁴¹Kirk Makin, "Risk of Bernardo's killing Homolka rated 'high': Ex-wife probably would have been murdered eventually despite being the perfect female accomplice, psychiatrist's report says," Globe and Mail [Toronto] 2 Sept. 1995: p. A5.

she replied: "I find it very difficult to put my feelings into words, because putting them into words would trivialize the whole thing."²⁴²

In a feature article published after the jury gave its verdict, Makin stepped from news reporter into the role of columnist, and commented that Homolka was an "inscrutable individual". Still, he thought he had an insight; Bernardo had taken some Polaroid shots of her nude and bound, and Makin recognized Homolka's glassy stare. The journalist had seen that same look in people's eyes, who were being physically punished at a sadomasochistic club in New York.

...we had been wrong to make our judgments about her based on stereotypes. She may have been reared in a semi-rural area of St. Catharines, Ont., but her psyche was pure 19th Street and SoHo in Manhattan. It was those amateur bondage photos that helped convince me that the Karla Homolka who teamed up with Paul Bernardo in 1987 was simply answering her own particular sexual call of the wild.²⁴³

In dismissing stereotypes, Makin furthered the press's quest for the true Homolka.

We see that personal biases, bureaucracy and a cultural concept all influenced how the media portrayed Homolka. Columnists imposed their conservative biases by emphasizing the value of individual responsibility, but they still attacked the conservative power structure by criticizing the legal system for its handling of Homolka's plea bargain. The bureaucracy of that system, along with the bureaucracy of the newspaper, affected the journalists' ability to provide a full picture of Homolka. Finally, the cultural concept of

²⁴²John Duncanson and Jim Rankin, "Emotionless Karla a true mystery, doctors say," Toronto Star 3 Sept. 1995: p. A6.

²⁴³Kirk Makin, "The world of Courtroom 6-1," Globe and Mail [Toronto] 2 Sept. 1995: p. D1.

the opposition and relationship of male and female sometimes caused journalists to reinforce the stereotypes of helpless victim and evil woman. Yet the media also presented a more intricate portrait of Bernardo's accomplice, and many journalists concluded that the woman was too complex to completely explain. She was an enigma.

Chapter Six

The Paul Bernardo murder trial opened yesterday with a chilling portrayal of the 30-year-old bookkeeper as a monster obsessed with sex and exerting power over his victims, frequently using blackmail, beatings and weapons to enforce his will.²⁴⁴

Bernardo was accused of horrible crimes, and journalists sometimes called him a monster, or portrayed him as one. I will examine various factors to see if they influenced the press to construct this image, consequently propping up the status quo. The first factor is that of personal biases. As discussed earlier, a columnist's job is to express his or her biases, and the biases Blatchford and Cheney revealed in interviews can be used to guide an examination of their articles. Biases voiced by news reporters are more difficult to identify in articles, because news reporters try to write objectively. One may still look for biases, but the exercise can be suspect, as we saw with respect to the conjunction "and". Thus, I will focus on columnists' biases.

Blatchford had an obvious conservative bias in favor of individual responsibility. She said in the interview that neither family nor environment could explain the rapist and murderer. People in society enabled Bernardo to become a violent sex offender, but he was ultimately responsible for creating himself.²⁴⁵ He had to take responsibility for his actions. This bias was not explicit in Blatchford's writing, however. She certainly blamed

²⁴⁴Makin, "Bernardo portrayed as monster."

²⁴⁵News reporters, such as Rankin and Pron, said he was like a sponge. He chose the worst of society--the violent, misogynist pornography, movies and rap lyrics--and absorbed it.

him for committing specific acts, such as terrorizing Mahaffy.²⁴⁶ But Blatchford did not discuss Bernardo's will in the same manner that she discussed Homolka's. In the case of Homolka, Blatchford said that the ex-wife could not shift the blame to Bernardo; she had a will and knew how to use it. Bernardo's case was different, because he was not asserting that Homolka blackmailed and beat him into submission. This may be the reason why Blatchford's columns did not question his will.

Her columns also only touched on society's role in creating Bernardo. One might expect Blatchford's bias to influence her to construct columns that limited society's responsibility. In contrast, one column commented that Bernardo was probably "a perfectly logical product of the modern age, one of the 'giant babies,' ...an infant-in-a-suit, as self-absorbed, as needy, as demanding of immediate gratification as any normal six-month-old."²⁴⁷ Blatchford did not examine Bernardo's background, however. Columns examined his character, but not the environment in which it developed. The factor of bureaucracy, to be considered later, restricted her from writing about much of his background, and perhaps discouraged her from voicing her opinions in this regard.

I did not interview DiManno, but we have seen that her columns about Homolka revealed a bias in favor of individual responsibility. DiManno shared Blatchford's view about Homolka; the killer was able to exercise her will, and could not shift the blame to Bernardo. As mentioned above, Bernardo was not claiming that someone had dominated him, and the issue of his will did not arise in DiManno's columns. DiManno incorporated

²⁴⁶Christie Blatchford, "Unspeakable horrors," Toronto Sun 3 June 1995: p. 5.

²⁴⁷Blatchford, "Icy Bernardo chills soul."

an idea that Blatchford advanced in her interview, though, in writing that society helped him create himself. DiManno described the slogans and images, some of them well-known, covering the wall of his bedroom in the home in which he was raised

The American dream writ large on a Scarborough wall--up to, and including, the Statue of Liberty.
This is the advice with which Bernardo had surrounded himself:
Poverty is self-imposed; Money never sleeps; The facts don't count when you have a dream; Inventions can be managed but people have to be led; If you don't know where you're going, you won't like where you end up; Self-denial leads to self-mastery; Fake it until you make it; Nice guys finish last.²⁴⁸

At the time, bureaucracy kept DiManno from telling readers where some of the less common sayings came from; this will be discussed later. DiManno did write that the slogans gave people a better look at Bernardo than the videotape of him nude, having impersonal sex with Homolka. We see that she believed Bernardo created himself, with society's help. She also refused to let him blame his faults on nature. DiManno rejected an excuse Bernardo gave on an audiotape he made for Homolka after she left him; he said his mother had passed on weak genes.²⁴⁹

In the interview with Cheney, he said that he had not yet decided whether Bernardo was the product of nature or nurture. (The interview was conducted a few days after the trial ended.) His columns indicated that he was willing to consider both sides. The following passages demonstrate this flexibility:

We were all stunned that someone who had done the things he had

²⁴⁸DiManno, "So tedious, these tapes, played not once, but twice."

²⁴⁹Rosie DiManno, "Bernardo's pleas move court to snickers," Toronto Star 15 June 1995: p. A8.

could look like a pledge from Sigma Phi--perhaps we had assumed that his species would walk with knuckles on the ground, for easy identification.²⁵⁰

He is many things--child of Scarborough, failed rap star, unemployed accountant, admitted sex criminal and, yesterday, the cool survivor of his cross-examination match with Crown Attorney Ray Houlahan.²⁵¹

In the first passage, Cheney referred to Bernardo's species, presumably from an earlier era. While the columnist may have been facetious in mentioning a less evolved species, he was still pointing out the role of nature in the formation of Bernardo. The second passage implied that the killer's background was also important. The passage provided a limited view of this background; for instance, it mentioned his childhood in Scarborough, but did not expand on the experiences Bernardo had during that time. Perhaps his experiences in trying to be a rap star and an accountant also affected his character, but the column did not go into details. Again, bureaucracy restricted coverage.

The factor of bureaucracy came into play when the judge ruled certain evidence inadmissible. In attempting to ensure that Bernardo receive a fair trial, the judge forbade the Crown from entering evidence such as the role of rap music in his life. Testimony revealed that Bernardo aspired to be a rap star, but the Crown could not question witnesses about his rap lyrics, which police found when they searched his house. Consequently, journalists were forbidden from reporting or commenting on this information. The evidence was revealed only after the jury was sequestered. At that time,

²⁵⁰Peter Cheney, "The sounds that will forever be remembered," Toronto Star 23 Aug. 1995: p. A6.

²⁵¹Peter Cheney, "A trial that's first, last and always about video," Toronto Star 17 Aug. 1995: p. A12.

the Sun published an eight-page pull-out section detailing the evidence. In the top corner of some pages, this flag appeared: "What the jury didn't hear."²⁵² One article described Bernardo's rap lyrics, and an audiotape on which he recorded his thoughts about potential lyrics. The Crown, in trying to persuade the judge to admit this evidence, argued that Bernardo was "'speaking about himself in the lyrics. This is the closest you get to look at the mind of Paul Bernardo.'"²⁵³ The Sun article stated that the lyrics revealed Bernardo as a man who had no respect for women, had numerous insecurities, yet also believed he deserved to rule others. The article included several lyrics, and the Globe highlighted a couple of verses, including the following, from a song titled "Deadly Innocence".

Did you ever get caught?
No, never. Why?
They say I'm a deadly innocent guy.
You think I'm innocent,
but behind this, I'm packing a lot of deadliness.
So come at me, come at me.
I got a nice fucking face, I look like a pretty boy.²⁵⁴

The judge also decided against letting the jury hear about where Bernardo found many of his ideas for lyrics. Bernardo turned to movies and soundtracks--to the culture of his society--for inspiration. After the jury was sequestered, the Sun quoted the audiotape Bernardo made. For example, Bernardo told himself,

"Look in the movies. Take expressions the way people say certain words and then take them out and put them in your songs, man, like

²⁵²Toronto Sun 1 Sept. 1995: pp. 1, 3, 4, 6, 8 (Special section).

²⁵³Alan Cairns and Scott Burnside, "'Deadly innocent': 'Young Hype' Bernardo dreamed of stardom as rap artist," Toronto Sun 1 Sept. 1995: p. 8 (Special section).

²⁵⁴Makin, "Paul and Karla: sadistic sex addict and compliant partner."

something that really hits you, it's like, 'that's cool', like, 'you wanna see crazy? I'll show you crazy,' like, you know, that type of thing, which is from (the movie) *Lethal Weapon*...."²⁵⁵

Another movie supplied many of the slogans that Bernardo fastened to his bedroom wall in Scarborough. In Wall Street, a ruthless stockbroker broke the law to make money and surround himself with beautiful women and expensive merchandise. The stockbroker lived by rules such as "Money never sleeps."²⁵⁶

Much of Bernardo's reading material was also deemed inadmissible at trial. Newspaper articles that Bernardo saved, which recounted sex offences committed by other people, were considered more prejudicial than relevant to the trial. (Newspaper articles that Bernardo clipped, which dealt with the crimes he was alleged to have committed, were allowed as evidence.) The judge also ruled against admitting department store flyers that Bernardo had kept. The advertising flyers had pictures of young females wearing exercise clothes, pyjamas or underwear. After the jury was sequestered, the Sun printed a story describing Bernardo's collection of news clippings and flyers.²⁵⁷ At that point, the Sun also told readers that Bernardo kept a novel, American Psycho, at his bedside. The novel is about a young stockbroker on Wall Street who raped and murdered at night. The fictional account involves vivid depictions of the main character's violent crimes, and the Crown argued that Bernardo treated the novel as his bible. The judge

²⁵⁵Cairns and Burnside, "'Deadly innocent.'"

²⁵⁶Alan Cairns and Scott Burnside, "'The illusion is real': Money, power, image his touchstones in life," Toronto Sun 1 Sept. 1995: p. 1 (Special section).

²⁵⁷Alan Cairns and Scott Burnside, "Twisted obsessions," Toronto Sun 1 Sept. 1995: p. 4.

decided against admitting the evidence because the Crown failed to show him that Bernardo used the novel as a guidebook in committing his crimes against Mahaffy and French. Again, the judge was concerned about prejudicing the jury against Bernardo.²⁵⁸

This concern also led the judge to limit the evidence of one of Bernardo's former girlfriends. The woman was not allowed to testify about their relationship; she could only give evidence about a specific incident. The woman said that once, Bernardo put a ligature around her neck and raped her. The judge decided that this evidence was relevant in helping the jury assess Homolka's evidence; Homolka had testified that Bernardo had raped her in a similar fashion just before she left him.²⁵⁹ The Crown was also not allowed to elicit evidence regarding a series of rapes in Scarborough. Bernardo was charged with a number of the rapes, but those charges were not before the court at that time, and the judge ruled that the Crown had to restrict its case to trying to prove that Bernardo

²⁵⁸Cairns and Burnside, "Life imitates 'art' in Bernardo 'bible'."

The judge also refused to let the Crown introduce as evidence another book, called Perfect Victim. The true-crime book is about a man who physically and sexually dominated his girlfriend, married her, and later convinced her to help him kidnap a young woman. They kept her as a sex slave for seven years. The book was found in Bernardo and Homolka's home, and the Crown argued that Bernardo used it as an instruction manual on how to condition victims.

Alan Cairns and Scott Burnside, "Horrific echoes of California sex slave," Toronto Sun 1 Sept. 1995: p. 3 (Special section).

²⁵⁹Kirk Makin, "Bernardo ex-girlfriend tells of ordeal: Accused slipped twine around her neck and proclaimed he was 'the king' during brutal assault, court hears," Globe and Mail [Toronto] 1 Aug. 1995: p. A4; Nick Pron and John Duncanson, "Twine tied around my neck during sex, ex-lover testifies," Toronto Star 1 Aug. 1995: p. A6; Alan Cairns and Scott Burnside, "Ex-girlfriend tells of brutal sex: Says she was choked with rope," Toronto Sun 1 Aug. 1995: pp. 4-5.

The articles added that although the judge ruled to limit the ex-girlfriend's testimony, she gave hints indicating Bernardo regularly abused her during their three-year relationship.

abducted, assaulted and murdered Mahaffy and French.²⁶⁰

The judge, in denying the Crown the right to enter certain evidence, also prohibited the press from publishing this evidence. Thus, during the trial, journalists were limited in how they could portray Bernardo. Even after the jury was sequestered, the Star remained cautious, and did not publish any of this evidence, or commentary on it, until after the verdict was reached. The following quotation appeared in an article the day after Bernardo was found guilty:

"The Star's policy is not to publish anything during a trial that could influence the jurors," said managing editor Lou Clancy.

"That's why we avoided commentary and analysis, until now, and tried to report the trial in a straightforward manner, without sensationalizing the more horrific parts."²⁶¹

We see that not only did the bureaucracy of the court affect coverage, but the bureaucracy of the newspaper itself limited that which was published. The Star held to a policy that caused it to refrain from printing certain evidence and analysis until after the verdict. At that time, the newspaper delved into Bernardo's background, such as the role of pornography in his life. A feature article presented the view that Bernardo started consuming porn in his formative, teenage years, and it shaped his sexual identity. He learned that violence and sex belonged together. The journalist noted that "Bernardo, 31, has been characterized as a monster, yet his behavior--so revolting in the eyes of the

²⁶⁰ Alan Cairns and Scott Burnside, "Bernardo boasted of rapes," Toronto Sun 1 Sept. 1995: p. 3.

²⁶¹ Judy Steed, "Commentary wasn't published in case jurors were influenced," Toronto Star 2 Sept. 1995: p. A12.

world--is ordinary stuff in terms of hard-core pornography."²⁶² While the Star was eventually able to reject this stereotype of the monster, bureaucracy fostered the image during the trial.

The factor of bureaucracy also arose in the form of publication bans. As discussed in the last chapter, the ban on the details at Homolka's trial kept journalists from revealing the woman's role in the crimes. It also prevented journalists from writing about the part Bernardo played. At Bernardo's trial, though, the ban was lifted. Another ban, however, restricted journalists' portrayal of Bernardo during the trial. Journalists could not view the videotapes involving victims. Thus, they lacked a visual context for the words he spoke, and had difficulty judging him. Earlier, I considered the videotape of the couple raping Tammy, and noted that the Sun described Bernardo as "barking" at Homolka.²⁶³ The implication is that he was the harsh director of the assault. Unable to view his facial expressions and body language, journalists may have been wrong in portraying him as the dominant ruler; Homolka may have been a willing accomplice, only disgusted by Tammy's period, not the immorality involved in committing the rape.

In a news report, Makin noted how courtroom observers could have difficulty using only their ears to interpret the tapes. Bernardo ordered French to act for the camera, and Makin said that for some scenes, observers needed more than the soundtrack to determine whether the accused and his victim were performing or expressing real feelings.

²⁶²Judy Steed, "A taste for porn shaped 'ordinary' sexual sadist," Toronto Star 2 Sept. 1995: p. A12.

²⁶³Burnside and Cairns, "Jurors see graphic sex attack."

"This is particularly so in one instance, in which Mr. Bernardo says: 'Give me the knife. I'm going to kill her now.' Given the context, it appeared possible that Mr. Bernardo intended the threat as some kind of joke."²⁶⁴

Another rule of the court affected Bernardo's portrayal. The Crown presented its case first. Thus, the order of questioning enabled Homolka to provide her viewpoint of Bernardo, while he had to wait to give his perspective. Combined with videotape evidence showing him tormenting the victims, Homolka's testimony that he was an abusive, domineering master established the frame for his portrayal. Her claims were highlighted in headlines and ledes. In a column, Blatchford noted that Rosen sought to change Bernardo's frame: "to his defence team, he's 'the boy', and indeed, to whatever degree possible, it's that vision of their client--Bernardo as goofy, overgrown boy-man--which they will try to show the jurors."²⁶⁵ Blatchford doubted the defence could change the frame, though, because of how he acted on the videotapes. Other journalists certainly did not portray him as an immature young man who had acted recklessly.

Another rule of the court could have influenced the way journalists depicted Bernardo. The defence was under no obligation to call any witnesses, including its client.²⁶⁶ Rosen dropped hints that Bernardo would testify, but until he took the stand, the

²⁶⁴Kirk Makin, "French made to smile during rape tapes show: Victims' families stay away as Bernardo jurors view scenes of violence, degradation," Globe and Mail [Toronto] 6 June 1995: p. A5.

²⁶⁵Christie Blatchford, "Finally, we get to see Bernardo--live."

²⁶⁶Nick Pron, "Bernardo may testify next week in defence," Toronto Star 9 Aug. 1995: p. A1.

possibility remained that journalists' only access to the accused would be via videotapes and his appearance in the prisoner's box. In an interview published after Bernardo was found guilty, Rosen said he had always intended to put his client on the stand. "'I always felt he had to testify,' Mr. Rosen said. 'This is just a two-witness case. It wasn't good enough just to call her [Ms. Homolka] a murderer.'"²⁶⁷ Still, the decision was Rosen's, an official in the bureaucratic court system, and he could have kept Bernardo in the prisoner's box. His decision to have Bernardo testify in his own defence broadened journalists' ability to portray the accused.

Of course, journalists pushed the bureaucratic limits. As we have seen, the Star and the Sun risked charges of contempt of court when they published interviews conducted outside of the trial. The Star printed an interview with the prostitute whom Bernardo and Homolka hired in Atlantic City. The story was quite innocuous, however, since it revealed little more than the prostitute's shock that others had seen her having sex with the couple. The Sun published an interview with a woman who had a fling with Bernardo in Florida. One could argue that this story posed a greater threat to Bernardo's right to a fair trial, since it included the woman's comments about Bernardo's short temper and penchant for anal sex. During my personal interview with Burnside, he said that the judge was upset with the story because he feared it could prejudice the trial. The judge warned journalists against publishing any more interviews conducted outside of the trial, and the reprimand seemed to have its desired effect: Burnside said he and his partner, Cairns, were careful to

²⁶⁷Kirk Makin, "Rosen cites victims' families for voiding deal," Globe and Mail [Toronto] 2 Sept. 1995: p. A6.

not upset him again. In my review of news articles, I found no other stories, in any of the newspapers, that pushed the bureaucratic limits by including evidence not presented in court.

We see that the factor of bureaucracy restricted how the press could portray Bernardo. Journalists could not delve into much of the available evidence about his background, and courted punishment, in the form of reprimands or contempt charges, if they searched for new evidence. The journalists were forced to recount only that which they observed while the jury was in the courtroom. That meant they relied on the accused's appearance, videotapes, testimony of witnesses and questions and comments made by the lawyers and judges. Yet another factor shaped their observations. The cultural concept of the opposition and relationship of male and female may affect how people, including journalists, see the world. This concept involves traditional gender roles, in which men are aggressive and women are passive. In their dominant role, men have a responsibility to protect women, and if a man breaches his role and harms a woman, he may be stereotyped as a crazy sex fiend, or monster, in a morality play. The play condemns the monster and reminds the audience that, as a monster, he does not belong to society. Thus, society is not responsible for creating him.

While journalists, in interviews, recognized the stereotype, they seldom explicitly called him a monster in news articles. One exception was a Globe article published the day after the Crown made its opening address. This address revealed details that many people had been waiting almost two years to hear, and the Globe gave the story considerable priority. The story appeared at the top centre of the page, with a headline in

larger type than those belonging to other stories above the newspaper's fold. The headline read, "Bernardo portrayed as monster." The lede, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, said Bernardo was depicted as "a monster obsessed with sex and exerting power over his victims."²⁶⁸

The word "monster" also appeared in a news report in the Star. On June 24, the newspaper separated the trial coverage into five stories (not including DiManno's column), and one of the stories quoted Homolka. The headline, in larger type than others on the page, told readers, "Court hears outburst: 'I think he's a monster.'"²⁶⁹ Homolka made the statement while she was on the stand, and one could contend that the factor of bureaucracy influenced journalists to print her words. The journalists' job was to report that which was said in court, and they were not supposed to stray beyond the court. Yet they had observed a full day of testimony, and did not have to select her comment that he was a monster. Indeed, reporters for the Globe and the Sun chose not to reinforce the stereotype.

The stereotype springs from the cultural concept of the opposition and relationship of male and female, so we see that this concept influenced journalists. Still, the influence did not appear to be great, since the stereotype rarely appeared in news articles. Bureaucracy seemed a more powerful force, because it kept journalists from delving into Bernardo's background. It also led journalists, on at least one occasion, to dismiss the

²⁶⁸Makin, "Bernardo portrayed as monster."

²⁶⁹Jim Rankin, John Duncanson and Nick Pron, "Court hears outburst: 'I think he's a monster,'" Toronto Star 24 June 1995: p. A21

stereotype of monster. After Bernardo was found guilty, the Sun published a story, in which an official source set the frame. Rosen told reporters that Bernardo was a human being. The Sun printed Rosen's statement that, "He may have an illness, I don't know. The fact of the matter is he is just another person. Don't make him out to be anything other than that. There, but for the grace of God, may go you or I, so just remember that."²⁷⁰

Some letter writers were not at all hesitant about calling Bernardo a monster. All the newspapers printed letters that stereotyped the accused killer. One reader, whose letter was published by the Sun, invoked the idea of morality plays by stating, "People who become monsters must be put on the public stage."²⁷¹ Another reader failed to distinguish between the concept of a monster, something that does not belong to society, and a man, who does. The reader told the Globe that "Anyone who commits such acts is a monster and deserves to die a forgotten man..."²⁷² Another reader was quite definite about the distinction. She told the Star that Bernardo was a "sadistic monster" and "subhuman". Only a creature such as this could conceive of a plot so horrific; a human could not create the stories of Mahaffy's and French's ordeals.²⁷³

²⁷⁰Scott Burnside and Alan Cairns, "Sex-killer still 'human being'," Toronto Sun 2 Sept. 1995: p. A3.

²⁷¹Kevin W. Starr, letter to editor, "Here abide monsters," Toronto Sun 11 June 1995: p. 2 (Comment).

²⁷²Peter Kalven, letter to editor, "The debate over capital punishment," Globe and Mail [Toronto] 8 July 1995: p. D7.

²⁷³Michelle Skibinsky, letter to editor, "Where does blame lie?" Toronto Star 2 Sept. 1995: p. E3.

Cheney used the same idea in one of his columns:

It was as if every detail had been written by an underworld screen-writer for maximum effect, right down to the tiniest flourish, such as the fact that Bernardo had used a Florida Spring Break beer funnel to perform a posthumous douche on Kristen French, to remove all incriminating traces of his sperm.²⁷⁴

In his columns, Cheney never called Bernardo a monster, or something else outside of human society, such as a devil. It was apparent, however, that Cheney had an affinity for similes and metaphors, and occasionally, he likened Bernardo, or the trial, to something from another world. For instance, he wrote that, "Bernardo's cross-examination was like Satan's own roller-coaster: There were no climbs, only descents, and the drops just kept coming and coming, each higher and steeper than the one before."²⁷⁵ He also commented that Bernardo "looks like Beaver Cleaver, yet behaved like Satan."²⁷⁶ This image contributed to Cheney's position, given during the personal interview, that Bernardo escaped suspicion for so long because of his boy-next-door looks. The killer had an effective disguise. Davey would likely criticize Cheney for portraying Bernardo in this way, since Davey believed that before the trial, journalists tried to add to the already horrific tale by calling Bernardo a monster in disguise. But Cheney maintained, in the interview, that Bernardo's charming boyish face was one of many faces that needed to be conveyed.

²⁷⁴Cheney, "The sounds that will forever be remembered."

²⁷⁵Cheney, "The sounds that will forever be remembered."

²⁷⁶Cheney, "In this heavyweight courtroom clash, one title bout that will see no winner."

Other columnists commented on how normal Bernardo looked. Heather Bird said women found him frightening for this very reason.²⁷⁷ Michele Mandel remarked that "We've learned the evil among us wears every disguise. Never can we fully trust each other again."²⁷⁸ Such comments perpetuated the image of a monster lurking behind a human mask. Blatchford also remarked upon Bernardo's "normal" looks, but she suggested that not only did Bernardo look like the rest of us, he probably was one of us. In this column, she pointed to society's role in creating Bernardo. While she did not explain how society formed him, she described the end product: a "giant baby" who expected his needs and desires to be met immediately.²⁷⁹ She added that he was not unique. In another column, Blatchford returned to her basic view that Bernardo was mainly responsible for creating himself. She said that he (along with Homolka) constructed a world in which self-gratification was key, and she feared that others likely shared "this larger dark universe."²⁸⁰

Thus, Blatchford constructed a story of a man who belonged to society, but pushed the boundaries to live on the dark edge. However, she also made comments that implied that Bernardo was not a part of society. In the interview, she said that she never called him a monster, but she came close to the stereotype in a column. She wrote that an act

²⁷⁷Heather Bird, "Surprising sexual desires," Toronto Sun 18 July 1995: p. 11.

²⁷⁸Mandel, "The dark night of the soul."

²⁷⁹Blatchford, "Icy Bernardo chills soul."

²⁸⁰Christie Blatchford, "Submerged in their own sordid world of darkness," Toronto Sun 22 June 1995: p. 4.

Bernardo may have committed (and Homolka admitted to committing) was monstrous--letting French watch her parents plead, on television, that she be safely returned to them.²⁸¹ Another column implied that Bernardo was inhuman. Blatchford wrote about a term used by the Federal Bureau of Investigation to describe people like Bernardo. The FBI called them "oxygen thieves". "It's a brilliant term, I think, because it manages to suggest a worthless life, completely without contribution, that also spirits something away, and not merely air, from the rest of us."²⁸² Blatchford doubted that oxygen thieves could be turned into human beings.²⁸³

While Blatchford sometimes implicitly labelled Bernardo a monster, she explicitly commented that he was likely one of "us". One of her columns, discussed in the preceding chapter, advanced this portrayal. It proposed the idea of evil as the incomplete: those who are evil are not aliens, or monsters, but are less evolved human beings.²⁸⁴ Another feature article noted that people were wrong to stereotype Bernardo as a monster; in the world of hard-core pornography, his sexual appetite for bondage and violence was standard. Furthermore, society helped him gain that appetite. "He is not a freak from outer space. He is one of us, a product of this culture, conditioned in the shadowy

²⁸¹Christie Blatchford, "A murder trial that aged us all," Toronto Sun 23 Aug. 1995: p. 5. Blatchford noted that Bernardo and Homolka told different versions of the event. Bernardo said only Homolka was with French during the televised appeal; Homolka said both she and her then-husband were in the room.

²⁸²Christie Blatchford, "Feeling good his reason for being," Toronto Sun 19 Aug. 1995: p. 5.

²⁸³Blatchford, "Feeling good his reason for being."

²⁸⁴Christie Blatchford, "Mesmerizing faces of evil."

underworld of porn, where the dark side of the human psyche emerges in sadomasochism and sexual torture, in heroes who are rapists and serial killers."²⁸⁵ Another columnist did not even conjure the image of the monster when she suggested that Bernardo's fantasy life was similar to that commonly depicted in pornography, "in which the essential flattery for men is that the girls always want it and like it."²⁸⁶ Michele Landsberg wrote that movies, music, ads and fiction, as well as porn, make violence look sexy.²⁸⁷

Rick Salutin added to the discussion by considering G.W.F. Hegel's writing regarding the master-slave relationship. Salutin noted the Crown's contention that the case was about power, not sex, and felt that the German philosopher might be able to help make sense of the case. Hegel argued that every person needs a sense of self and self-worth, but can only achieve that sense through recognition by another. By enslaving someone, a master may try to gain that recognition, but he or she will never succeed. "The person in the position of power can never be truly affirmed by someone in an unequal position, since only equals can validate one another."²⁸⁸ Salutin's column pushed past the limits of stereotypes and provided insight to human relations.

In conclusion, various factors affected how the press portrayed Bernardo. Columnists' personal biases did not appear to play a large role, in part because the factor

²⁸⁵Steed, "A taste for porn shaped 'ordinary' sexual sadist," p. A1.

²⁸⁶Michele Landsberg, "Let's not forget rape survivors all around us," Toronto Star 8 July 1995: p. L14.

²⁸⁷Landsberg, "Let's not forget rape survivors all around us."

²⁸⁸Rick Salutin, "Covering the Bernardo trial," Globe and Mail [Toronto] 26 May 1995: p. C1.

of bureaucracy imposed so many restrictions on what they could write. The judge refused to admit a considerable amount of evidence, so that during the trial, journalists could not delve into Bernardo's background. They had to report that which they observed in court, including Homolka's testimony about Bernardo. Because of the videotape evidence, and the fact that Homolka took the stand before Bernardo, Bernardo was framed as an abusive master. With a couple of exceptions, news reports avoided the stereotype of monster, however. The stereotype, which stems from the cultural concept of the opposition and relationship of male and female, did appear in letters to the editor, and in some columns. It perpetuated the idea that society was not responsible for creating Bernardo, because he was a monster in disguise who had infiltrated the community. Yet other columns dismissed the stereotype, and pushed people to consider how society could be at least partly responsible for creating a man who linked violence with sex.

Conclusion

No one wants to excuse Paul Bernardo. No one wants to cast him, or see him cast, in a good light. The man abducted, raped and murdered two teenaged girls. A jury found him guilty of these offences, and everyone following the trial, save, perhaps, a couple of young women, likely breathed a sigh of relief when they heard the verdict.²⁸⁹ But one may still wonder how the light was cast. In training their spotlights on Bernardo, did the press throw a wide beam, encompassing his childhood, adolescence and later years, along with the culture he consumed? Or, conversely, did the press allow only a sliver of light to hit Bernardo (along with Homolka and the victims), so that the audience saw only the shadowy outline of a monster?

In this thesis, I have backed the academic view that a morality play involving a monster and a cardboard accomplice and victims would promote the status quo. Such a play would ignore society's role in the creation of Bernardo. Traditional institutions and the ideologies that have informed them would remain unquestioned. In addressing whether the media constructed a play like this, I looked at various influences that were discussed in academic literature. Early on, I dismissed the factor of business, because it appeared impossible to verify in this thesis. I also limited my examination of the factor of journalists' personal biases, to those belonging to columnists. Their job is to express their biases, so that one may make logical links between the opinions they speak about and

²⁸⁹I am referring to a fan, who reportedly went to the courthouse with her hair styled like Homolka's, and a former girlfriend of Bernardo, who, a year after the trial, was corresponding with him.

those they put down on paper. News reporters, on the other hand, generally strive to appear objective, so that it may be a specious endeavor trying to show how their biases are reflected in their writing.

The columnists' biases appeared to influence how they constructed news. Blatchford and DiManno held to the conservative view that individuals must take responsibility for their actions. However, Blatchford asserted that Bernardo was a product of society, and Cheney wavered between nature and nurture. Thus, society's role was considered. Meanwhile, Blatchford's conservative biases did not prevent her from criticizing the justice system. She questioned how Homolka's deal came to be, and demanded that the officials responsible for it explain their actions.

Still, the journalists could not escape the influence of bureaucracy. It played a major role in the process of constructing news. The newspapers themselves, as bureaucratic organizations, imposed constraints, such as deadlines and demands for a significant amount of copy. Pressure also came from the bureaucracy of the court; the threat of contempt charges led journalists to limit the way in which they portrayed the accused. A few journalists pushed the limits. Burnside and Cairns, for example, wrote a story that the newspaper's managers decided to publish, which provided information that was not revealed in court. However, a few stern words from the judge convinced Burnside to step back. Indeed, he was proud of the restraint showed by journalists at the trial. In another case, a newspaper pre-empted any trouble in the court. According to Blatchford, the Star killed a column written by DiManno, even after DiManno had worked out a compromise with management to stay late until everyone was satisfied with each day's work.

Thus, journalists and editors generally accepted restrictions set by the court system. Moreover, they worked within the system to challenge it. For instance, when newspaper organizations felt the judge of Homolka's trial was wrong to impose a publication ban, they appealed the decision to a higher court. In contrast, American journalists broke the ban. Of course, as long as they stayed in the United States, they could not be punished, but they were risking future opportunities to return to Canada. Canadian journalists also worked within the court system to challenge Judge LeSage's decision to prevent the public (including journalists) from viewing videotapes involving Bernardo's victims. Thus, the factor of bureaucracy influenced journalists to support the status quo. They accepted the court system, which limited what they could report about Bernardo, so that during the trial, people read about his horrendous acts, but little of how he came to be.

Another factor that influenced news construction was cultural concepts. Journalists and reporters recognized the concepts of the innocence of youth and the opposition and relationship of male and female. Patriarchy and cultural idealism informed these concepts, and journalists were encouraged to compartmentalize the victims as virgins or vamps. Homolka could be stereotyped as a helpless victim or an evil woman. Finally, Bernardo faced the stereotype of the monster. These stereotypes appeared in a number of news reports, letters and some columns. While the writers tended to dismiss further discussion, they actually provoked others to respond. Thus, a number of articles and columns rejected the stereotypes and urged people to consider society's role in the creation of Bernardo.

In conclusion, while the various factors influenced the press, they did not always

influence it to support the status quo. News reporters, more than columnists, became involved in the promotional machine, as their job restricted them from commenting upon the characters of the people involved in the trial. In producing masses of copy for daily deadlines, their articles repeated the gruesome details of how Bernardo hurt the "schoolgirls". The columnists, able (to a certain extent) to express their opinions, gave readers ideas of how Bernardo's and Homolka's minds worked. In particular, Blatchford and DiManno analyzed Homolka, discarding the stereotype of the helpless victim and considering the possibility that she might be an evil woman. In the end, they dismissed this stereotype too, saying that Homolka remained an enigma. In doing so, the columnists recognized the depth of the accomplice's personality. Analysis such as this expanded readers' views of the people in the trial, and, I believe, proved that assigning columnists to cover the trial every day was a valuable innovation.

Still, the dominant factor, bureaucracy, kept all journalists from revealing much of Bernardo's background. The audience had to wait until after the jury was sequestered (or, in the case of the Star, until after the verdict was announced) for the details. Then, a blizzard of stories hit the press, disclosing, among other things, Bernardo's dysfunctional family and exposure to pornography. People following the trial likely read at least some of these stories. Yet in the previous three months, a morality play had often appeared in the news sections of the paper. One may wonder whether the image of a monster had been embedded too deeply in the audience's consciousness, so that it was simply too late to fully explain Bernardo.

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