

That implicit assumption has never been tested in the context of Canadian media law and ethical norms. Tests of the assumption in the U.S. have cast doubt upon the validity of the assumption (e.g., Pritchard & Morgan 1989, Pritchard 1993), but the normative context of Canadian journalism is quite different.

This paper reports the results of a survey of Canadian journalists' views about law and ethics as the topics apply to journalism.

Previous studies

Given the social and political importance of journalism in Canada, it is somewhat surprising that Canadian journalists have been the object of little systematic study. Essays on the state of journalism in Canada and its regions have been frequent, but actual surveys have been rare and generally limited in scope. None have dealt with ethics or law.

One of the first published surveys about Canadian journalists focused not on journalists but on former journalists in hopes of finding out why they had left their newspapers (Wilson, 1966). The unsurprising answer? Low pay and lack of satisfaction with the routine nature of newspaper work.

Subsequent surveys focused on more interesting questions. Donald Wright tried to find out whether Canada's journalists were as unprofessional as the Special Senate Committee on Mass Media had claimed. Using scales of journalistic professionalism developed in the United States, Wright surveyed journalists at daily newspapers in the largest cities of Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia