HOW RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN REPORTERS AND EDITORS
AFFECT PRODUCTIVITY IN THE NEWSROOM

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by

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The undersigned, appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

HOW RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN REPORTERS AND EDITORS AFFECT PRODUCTIVITY IN THE NEWSROOM

Presented by Celia Darrough

A candidate for the degree of Master of Arts

And hereby certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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Associate Professor Jeanne Abbott

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Assistant Professor Tim Vos

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Assistant Professor Brian Houston
To Mom, Dad and Clare for supporting me and being there for me my entire life, even though you technically had to.

To Susan Visscher, who talked me through this thesis and saw more tears than she probably wanted, and Mitch Ryals, who was by my side throughout the process.

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HOW RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN REPORTERS AND EDITORS AFFECT PRODUCTIVITY IN THE NEWSROOM

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Dr. Jeanne Abbott, Thesis Supervisor

ABSTRACT

This study looked at the types of relationships between editors and reporters, how they regard each other personally, the desired level of editor involvement in a reporter’s work, how reporters and editors define productivity and how their relationships affect productivity. Twenty staff members at three newspapers of varying circulation and staff size were interviewed and observed during one week at each newspaper. This study found that while productivity is often measured on different scales, editors look favorably on reporters’ productivity when the relationship is positive. Reporters look to editors for guidance and support, which they believe improves productivity. More communication, more personal interaction and more mindful partnerships could result in even more productivity.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

“1. Never trust an editor. 2. Never trust an editor. 3. Never trust an editor.” Edna Buchanan did not mince words when giving three tips to aspiring reporters in her 1987 book, *The Corpse Had a Familiar Face*. Buchanan wrote that even though her editors generally meant well, they could be cavalier with a reporter’s story, embarrass a reporter, alienate a reporter’s sources, take the best stuff out of a story, insert errors, write a misleading headline and get the reporter in trouble. Many editors have a reputation for being difficult, demanding and distant. Fred Fedler, in his book on journalists’ lives from 1850 to 1950, wrote that editors were accused of ruining reporters’ stories. His research of journalism history suggests that editors were seen as unreasonable and, ultimately, reporters hated them (Fedler, 2000, p. 192). Editors were not that fond of reporters, either. In Fedler’s research, editors said they were paid to correct a reporter’s mistakes, and some editors wrote that not one reporter in 10 knew how to write (Fedler, 2000, p. 192).

A poor relationship between editors and reporters can lead to dissatisfaction with work and the workplace. Editors say they are dissatisfied with their jobs when they do not trust, respect or even like a reporter very much. In his study of city editors and job satisfaction, Charles St. Cyr (2008) found that editors with low job satisfaction said their perception of reporters had a strong negative correlation with how they felt about their
jobs. This sort of relationship between the boss and employee — if there is no trust or respect — can affect the way work is handled in a newsroom.

Editors and reporters have historically had a tumultuous relationship. In Gilbert Cranberg’s study of how often editing is responsible for published errors, one editor said in an interview, “Reporters think there is too much editing and editors think reporters are prima donnas,” (Cranberg, 1987).

Yet the relationship between an editor and a reporter can ultimately be one of the most important in a newsroom. Tom Hallman Jr., (2007) Pulitzer Prize winner and reporter at *The Oregonian*, compared the editor/reporter relationship to a marriage. “This can’t be any relationship that works on autopilot. Like any marriage it needs to be nurtured. But at many papers, that doesn’t happen,” he wrote in an article in *Quill*.

Hallman Jr. (2007) described an editor as similar to a basketball coach. An editor should know his or her writers’ strengths and weaknesses and what positions to assign reporters so they can produce their best work. Great editing is about an editor knowing the players and doing what is best for the reporter, the editor, the organization and the audience.

A report on the changing newsroom from the Project for Excellence in Journalism (2008) showed how newspapers are affected by cutbacks and the changing nature of resources.

In today’s newspapers, stories tend to be gathered faster and under greater pressure by a smaller, less experienced staff of reporters, then are passed more quickly through fewer, less experienced, editing hands on their way to publication, (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2008).
But how well will that approach work in the long run? In his article on measuring productivity of journalists, Robert Picard said managers must understand “the cost of journalists, the activities they undertake and their contribution to the product” if they want to improve productivity. Productivity is often targeted because of corporate pressure on managers to raise the bottom line. But, Picard asserts, newspaper managers must know how to help journalists be more efficient if higher productivity is the goal (Picard, 1998).

This study uses in-depth interviews and observations to understand how reporters and editors work together and whether the relationship positively or negatively affects productivity. By using a constant comparative method of qualitative analysis, the researcher’s purpose is to make generalizations about relationships and productivity in newsrooms in an attempt to build grounded theory.

This research will extend existing knowledge about facets of relationships and productivity. As the literature will show, connections have been identified to support that effective communication in the workplace is correlated with higher productivity in employees. This study attempts to further that knowledge by broadening it to relationships instead of focusing on communication. Previous studies have also focused on other organizations and have not been newsroom specific.

With this research, editors and reporters might be able to better understand the effects of their relationship with one another and how that relationship might improve the workplace.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Newsroom culture and change

In his 1955 article on social control in the newsroom, Warren Breed wrote about a
different newsroom than some might see today. In the 1950s, the publisher and
executives such as the editor-in-chief and the managing editor often dictated policy at
newspapers. Reporters and other staff were generally more politically liberal than the
publisher and executives, which sometimes created a contentious relationship if the
reporter defied writing rules created by executives. Although reporters had technically
lower status than editors, they were often treated not as subordinates but as co-workers.
In Breed’s interviews of about 120 journalists, he found that the newsroom was a friendly
place where everyone cooperated and was on a first name basis. There was solidarity in
the newsroom and a sense of pride in the work, he wrote (Breed, 1954).

Twenty years later in 1974, Chris Argyris found that newsroom staff described
colleagues as competitive and jealous, but they believed those were good qualities to
have. News employees were resistant to adopting new ideas and often did not listen to
others, whether it was a superior or co-worker (Argyris, 1974).

There is awareness in newsrooms that the jobs journalists perform play a
significant role in the democratic government of the United States and that journalism has
a tradition of public service (Breed, 1954; Farrell & Cupito, 2010). In their book on the
newspaper industry, Mike Farrell and Mary Carmen Cupito described four roles of newspapers: watchdog, informative, deliberative and agenda setting (Farrell & Cupito, 2010, p 62). These roles are important to journalists because they give a sense of purpose and play a part in newsroom culture.

In the 1990s, as newspaper readership declined and job anxiety among journalists increased, the American Society of Newspaper Editors created a Change Committee, which prompted editors to experiment with different initiatives that might help restore the credibility of the news industry. A widely believed theory held that news organizations were losing their focus on public service to the community and instead were writing about politicians and influential sources (McGuire, 1994, as cited in Gade, 2004). The Change Committee hoped to steer newspapers back in the original direction, a struggle that continues today.

James K. Gentry (1993) found in his dissertation for the University of Missouri–Columbia that if a newsroom wanted to improve its collective culture, five things were needed: strong leadership, management communication, staff involvement in the process, management rewarding correct behavior and extinguishing improper behavior, and anticipating problems.

In the report on the changing newsroom, the Project for Excellence in Journalism noted that technology had transformed both the product and the culture of newsrooms. New job demands in multimedia and web editing made younger journalists, who are versatile, tech-savvy and energetic, attractive to daily newspapers. Although these new hires brought with them competitive energy, talented, higher-salaried veteran reporters and editors have been cut because they are too costly. Newsroom executives cite this as
their single greatest loss when veterans take with them institutional knowledge, loyalty and expertise (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2008).

Ultimately, the new, desired culture is one where power and accountability are shared by managers and employees. This leads to an organizational “culture of contribution.” If managers want to create this culture, they have to give up some control and work on creating a partner relationship rather than a strict supervisor-subordinate relationship (Fisher, 2000).

Job responsibilities

Reporters

Reporters gather information and produce content. Though events don’t always happen that are newsworthy, it is a journalist’s job to find news and meet the challenge of producing content. Reporters witness events, are the first to know information and even influence decisions with their articles. Many reporters produce a mix of beat stories, assigned stories from editors and their own initiated stories. A typical day could involve interviewing sources, writing brief articles and longer stories, filing stories online, going out into the field to cover stories, writing Tweets, taking photographs, producing multimedia, using social media, and meeting deadlines (Breed, 1954; Harrower, 2010). Now, with the surge in online media, reporters are often required to produce material for the website and combine text with other elements. The basic qualities of a reporter — curiosity, determination, having story ideas, being able to talk comfortably to people and presenting information — are all still the same (Frost, 2002).

Argyris (1974) described three types of reporters based on interviews with 20 young reporters about the meaning of their work: the traditional reporter, the reporter-
researcher and the reporter-activist. The traditional reporter is objective, curious and distrustful. When it comes to writing, the traditional reporter gets the facts, writes them in the order of importance in the inverted pyramid style, gives a clear outline of what happened, all on a quick deadline. The reporter-researcher focuses on interpretive news, finds critical but hidden forces that shape events, performs investigative work and looks beyond the given information. The reporter-researcher does not force his or her views on readers, but shows what things might affect them of which they are unaware. The reporter-activist wishes to use journalism to change the world. He or she is more critical than constructive. If the reporter-activist thinks something is wrong, he or she says it instead of letting readers draw their own conclusions. Some reporters combine these roles.

Editors

Argyris (1974) defined two different kinds of editors based on interviews with editors at a newspaper he studied for three years. The first is a controlling editor whose main characteristics, according to reporters, are harshness and anger. The second kind is a withdrawn and passive editor whose main characteristics are coldness and distance. Both kinds of editors, reporters noted, are also brilliant and manipulative. This could be seen as a simplistic view, but could match reporters’ perceptions of their editors. In fact, all editors behave differently, though they are tasked with similar jobs.

City or metro editors at newspapers are charged with supervising their reporters and coverage of local news (Fedler, 2000). They assign stories to reporters, make edits, help direct reporters, enforce newspaper policy, communicate with higher editors and the publisher, and occasionally reprimand reporters (Breed, 1954). City editors supervise
reporters and their work, plan news coverage for the day and future days, solve problems, make story selections for the front page and check stories for accuracy and clarity, among other things (Harrower, 2010).

City editors also can be responsible for their department’s success and budget (Fedler, 2000). Not only do they act as coaches for reporters, editors have to deal with payroll, evaluations, hiring new employees and ultimately, just being responsible for their staff (Wizda, 2000). In order to handle the varying tasks, editors must have technical skills, good people skills and be good communicators and listeners along with their journalistic and professional skills (Peters, 1999).

**Reporter and editor relationships**

Print media depend on productive relationships between writers and editors (Wheeler, 1993). Relationship is defined as the interactions between reporters and editors, their opinions of one another, and perceptions of the other’s opinion. Sub-concepts of relationship include trust, respect, values and communication. Wheeler wrote that relationships can range from great to terrible, and they often touch on a lot of issues, such as strategic, legal, technical, aesthetic and interpersonal issues. Therefore, he asserts, writers and editors must understand their goals, roles and guidelines, communicate clearly, respect each other’s abilities and accommodate each other’s expectations.

A sociological study found that individuals behave according to their prevailing value system (Blau, 1960). Group and individual values affect behavior, therefore affecting a relationship. The values that frontline editors said most influenced their decision-making were journalistic, audience and organizational (Sylvie & Huang, 2008).
Editors and reporters struggle for control of information because they disagree on what should be communicated to the public. Editors are higher in the hierarchy, but reporters control the newsgathering process (Gassaway, 1984).

Gade (2004) found that management and “rank-and-file journalists” often disagreed, especially when it came to how management was perceived. Managers often saw themselves as performing their job well, while reporters felt like victims. When management tried to implement newsroom culture changes, the journalists believed those changes were motivated by profits rather than by journalistic standards of excellence, which caused distrust between the rank-and-file journalists and management. Reporters began to recognize that marketing and higher management were playing a part in the way the newsroom operated, and they were not happy about it.

Communication is the most important missing ingredient in a relationship between supervisors and subordinates. Hatch (1966) noted that most of a manager’s time is spent talking or listening to employees, and communication can affect the boss-employee relationship. Pease (1991) found that managers should be more aware of staff expectations, and he regarded communication as preventative maintenance. Jacqui Banaszynski (2002) found that the relationship between the editor and the reporter is one-on-one, but the relationship between the editor and all of the reporters can be one-on-four, one-on-eight, one-on-50, and on. The editor, she wrote, needs to make reporters aware that there is a bigger world than the scope of their stories.

Jeffers and Lewis (1989, as cited in Gade, 2004) found that journalists described their communication with an immediate supervisor as poor and could be improved by increasing the amount and frequency of communication among all levels of employees.
Litterst and Eyo (1982) separated managerial communication into two structures: formal and informal. Informal communication applies to the social and personal interactions within a group, not formal requirements set by an organization. Formal communication is the basic core of administrative information and is determined by the chain of command or formal procedure. The formal structure includes conferences, reports, memoranda, newsletters and more. A lot of communication between editors and reporters is informal, except in situations such as meetings and evaluations. The communication can range from positive to negative, but positive communication often leads to better results.

In a quantitative study, Jacqueline and Milton Mayfield found that motivating language from a leader increases an employee’s self-efficacy and performance. Leader motivating language is oral communication where the majority of the speech is transposed into strategic motivational messages. Self-efficacy is how employees interpret their own capability. The study found that with increased leader motivating language, employee self-efficacy will go up 34 percent and employee performance grows 20 percent. These enhancements can be made in the workplace by using communication tools such as feedback, goal setting and training (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2012).

The most common communication between an editor and reporter is when they meet in a “news conference” to discuss an article assignment. Communication also happens during group meetings where many people in the newsroom, including executives, gather to talk about stories (Breed, 1954).
Managerial issues

After interviewing more than 200 frontline editors, Greenman (2006) isolated four categories of significant supervisory or managerial problems: a lack of managerial authority and related new-in-the-role issues; giving direction, motivating and communicating expectations to staff; acting on poor, deteriorating or inappropriate performance — including firing; and confronting more and greater demands with fewer resources.

Greenman (2006) found the biggest managerial problem for editors was “giving direction, motivating and communicating expectations to staff.” Some editors have a hard time being forceful or confrontational and will make requests rather than demands. One frontline editor told him editors need to learn how to be more focused and more detailed in making assignments.

In Greenman’s (2006) study, he wrote that many frontline editors had been reporters and had a hard time managing people who were once their peers. The editors he interviewed said reporters were often “struggling with accepting my authority,” would “challenge assignments,” were “personally insulting” and “very negative.” It was hardest, they said, with veteran reporters who think they have “all the answers” and think they know “more about what the paper needs than I do.” Journalists have a tendency to be anti-authority.

A survey by Peters (1999) found that communication showed up as a major problem for middle managers. The report, which surveyed more than 500 staffers at 19 newspapers, found that communication was given the lowest grades when assessing
supervisors’ performance, and staffers and middle managers rated “good communication” and “good listening skills” in the top 10 characteristics of the best middle managers.

Reporters and other nonsupervisory employees believe that a lot of problems would be solved if their editors would spend more time with them, Peters found. These employees said “isolated or inaccessible” is one of the most common traits in subpar middle managers. A middle manager was defined as above a reporter position, but below an assistant managing editor position. In the study, respondents rated managers’ professional/journalism skills high, but management skills such as performance coaching, feedback and clarity of vision low (Peters, 1999).

Argyris (1974) found that newsroom staffers believed their organization was managed more by conspiracy than it was by openness because of the lack of open discussion of how management makes decisions. Another problem he mentioned was how executives tend to be impatient, so reporters will agree to decisions when they aren’t actually in full agreement. Due to that perceived impatience and a slight fear of the editors, staffers felt they had little freedom to explore issues thoroughly in meetings. He found some reporters argued that group meetings can be a waste of time because coworkers tend to speak up to either impress the boss or merely to hear themselves talk, which reporters say makes the meetings ineffective.

Editors sometimes insert errors into an article. The cause of errors published in a newspaper can be grouped into three areas: reporting, editing and newsroom culture (Mensing & Oliver, 2005). Reporters cited time constraints, an editor/reporter rift, lack of care for a story, and unwillingness to share an edited version as reasons they did not work with editors during the editing process (Cranberg, 1987). One reporter noted,
Our assistant city editors are very accommodating and will allow you to look over their shoulders while they edit. The only exceptions come when one or both of you are pressed for time or . . . frankly don't care very much about the story. Unfortunately, the latter happens more often than anyone would care to admit, (Cranberg, 1987).

In an ASNE report on credibility, 34 percent of journalists said the “rush to deadline” is the reason for errors; another third said it was a combination of being overworked and understaffed; and the other third blamed “inattention, carelessness, inexperience, poor knowledge” and bad editing and reporting. They also mentioned high volume of pages, early deadlines, laziness, failure to communicate, overconfidence, a lack of care, and stupidity as reasons for mistakes (Urban, 1999). When taking responsibility for their actions, editors said some causes of errors being published include the editor failing to check for holes in the story, failing to make sure standard newsgathering methods were followed, and failing to check for adequate sources in the story (Mensing & Oliver, 2005).

Productivity

In Clampitt and Downs’ (1993) study of communication and productivity, respondents from two companies defined productivity in a few different ways. The highest percentage of responses referred to productivity as the quantity of work an employee produces, getting the job done, efficient use of time and quality of the work.

Today, newspapers have to do more with less (Sylvie & Huang, 2008). Productivity is determined by how efficient a reporter or editor is when performing the tasks of his or her position. It might depend on whether time is being used efficiently,
how much work is being produced, whether the activities being performed are useful for the newspaper or if the workload is unevenly distributed among employees. Most of these relate to reporting, but when it comes to an editor, it also matters how that person organizes, manages and interacts with the reporter (Picard, 1998).

Productivity can be measured simply by managers tracking a journalist’s output such as the number of articles that have been written or edited. It can also be more specific, if an editor wants to look at the number of words in an original article or the column inches provided or by looking at how many articles were written from press releases and the like. Productivity can also be measured by keeping track of use of time (Picard, 1998).

Ryfe (2009) completed an 18-month participant observation at a mid-sized newspaper and observed that daily beat reporting served as a deep structure of news production. During that period, a new editor mandated that reporters produce more enterprise and less daily news. What actually happened was the opposite. Ryfe found that for every enterprise story produced, reporters wrote nine daily stories on average. The routine of beat reporting is so important because of access and authority, and it promotes productivity because the reporter knows what his or her tasks are.

In terms of how the relationship between supervisors and their employees might affect productivity, Kim (1975) found that effective feedback from supervisors about performance resulted in higher productivity in subordinates. Clampitt and Downs (1993) found that personal feedback had a significant impact on productivity, as many employees said it motivated them to work harder and made them feel good about
themselves and their work. This supports the idea that communication, which is a facet of a relationship, affects productivity in the workplace.

In a study of employee attitudes and productivity, Lawshe and Nagle (1953) found that the behavior of a supervisor, as perceived by employees, is highly related to the productivity of the employees as perceived by managers. Essentially, managers have a leadership role in a company, and the attitude of leaders can greatly influence the performance and output of the employees they manage. The authors cite Katz (1949), who mentioned supervisor behaviors that have a positive impact on productivity. Katz wrote that supervisors whose employees are highly productive generally place less emphasis on production, encourage worker participation in decision-making, are employee-centered, and spend more time supervising than producing work.

Not only feedback, but also the quality of perceived social support affects productivity. A study of the relationship between social support and burnout, job satisfaction and productivity found that immediate supervisor support is associated with productivity of employees. Supervisors who are perceived by their employees as supportive might behave in ways that make the employees’ performance stronger (Baruch-Feldman, Brondolo, Ben-Dayan & Schwartz, 2002).

Most of the literature on productivity and supervisor-subordinate relationships focuses on a facet of the relationship, such as communication or job satisfaction. This study will attempt to look at the relationship as a whole and whether it affects employee productivity. It will look at editors, who are in a supervisory role with reporters, to determine the kinds of relationships that exist and how the reporters perform in their jobs.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study used two trusted qualitative methods — semi-structured in-depth interviews and observations — to fully understand the complexities of the relationship between editors and reporters and its effect on productivity. The researcher used a purposive sample of three newspapers based on the logic of observing how relationships might vary when different companies own the papers. To obtain valid findings, the researcher performed a detailed analysis to sort fact from fiction using the constant comparative method and a comprehensive data treatment plan. To be reliable, the researcher fully documented the process of the study and the procedures of analyzing to show the consistency of coding categories (Silverman, 2010). The study looked to answer two questions:

RQ1: How do newspaper reporters and editors perceive their relationship with each other?

RQ2: Does the relationship between a newspaper reporter and editor affect the productivity of the reporter?

In-depth interviews

Interviews have historically been used as a legitimate form of measurement and a way to understand perspectives (Fontana & Frey, 1994). This research features both. Semi-structured in-depth interviews allow the researcher to ask the same questions of
participants, but they also allow for further explanation by permitting deviation from the list of set questions and follow-up on answers that a participant gives. The semi-structured nature of these interviews is important because it provides infinite options for the participants, and the researcher is able to look for common themes. The researcher used tested elicitation methods as described by Johnson and Weller (2001) in an attempt to reveal understanding of the subjects and minimize researcher bias. The researcher established the interview as different from a normal conversation by explaining that the purpose of the study is to learn about the topic. The researcher began with broad, descriptive questions about productivity to fully understand the scope of the organization before moving into more detailed, meaningful questions about relationships. The researcher asked the same main questions of each respondent based on his or her status as a reporter or editor, while still allowing for deviation from the script.

To help determine the relationship, the researcher asked reporters and editors about their interactions with each other, whether they are positive or negative, how they perceive one another and how they perceive the relationship. Questions prompted the respondents to describe their feelings toward the editor or reporter, to describe their relationship and how it differs from other work relationships, and to talk about communication. To assess productivity, reporters were asked to self-report on their use of time, how many articles they write per day and what a typical day looks like. Editors were asked about the reporters’ productivity by asking similar questions and asking how productive they think the reporters are. Interviews were conducted one-on-one. Most of the interviews took place face-to-face in the newsroom, but phone interviews were
allowed for reporters who worked in bureaus in other cities. The interviews were audio recorded with the participants’ permission.

**Observation**

In-depth interviews often are practiced hand in hand with observations (Fontana & Frey, 1994). In order to fully grasp the relationship between editors and reporters, there must be some outside observation involved. In-depth interviews allowed for the participants to self-report on their relationship, but observation allowed the researcher to determine the way they communicate and interact.

Participant observation is a process of seeing, interpreting and recording data (Schwartz & Schwartz, 1955). For this study, the researcher followed the definition of Schwartz and Schwartz by being present in a social situation and having a face-to-face relationship with the observed to gather data. The researcher acted as a formal complete observer and did not participate in any proceedings. The researcher observed any interactions between the reporter and editor that were allowed, from personal meetings in a conference room to quick conversations at a desk. Personal field notes were taken. All steps were taken to ensure the researcher was a passive participant rather than active. The observation was useful to see interactions as they occur and to see dimensions of the relationship that the participants might not report. The observations took place in the respective newsrooms for four days each.

**Selecting and contacting research participants**

The research is based on a purposive sample of three newspapers in the central United States. To control for different company cultures, the researcher wanted to study
newspapers owned by different media corporations. This allowed the researcher to observe supervisory practices in different companies.

The researcher began by identifying which media companies to study. After selecting three, newspapers at those companies within driving distance were considered. The researcher identified whom to speak with based on title and by sending emails to staff members inquiring about who would be best suited to make the decision. Contacts ranged from the newsroom administrator to the executive editor.

Once the researched compiled the short list of possible newspapers, emails were sent to the identified contacts. The emails outlined the research and what would be required: one week in the newsroom, with the researcher observing in the newsroom and interviewing two editors and three reporters assigned to those two editors. Due to the sensitive nature of some of the interview material, consent documents that clearly stated the interviews would be recorded but kept confidential were sent as an attachment. The consent document also made clear the purpose of the study and the ways that participants would be kept anonymous, by omitting all identifying information and identifying participants as only “Editor A” at “Paper X,” “Reporter E1” at “Paper Z,” and so on.

Three newspapers agreed to participate. Paper X and Z are owned by two large, publicly traded media companies; Paper Y is owned by a smaller, privately owned media company. Paper X is a citywide newspaper with a weekday circulation of nearly 200,000. Paper Y is a statewide newspaper with a weekday circulation of nearly 180,000. Paper Z is a citywide newspaper with a weekday circulation of nearly 40,000 (Alliance for Audited Media).
Once the newspapers were selected, there was then the question of which editors and reporters to focus on. At papers X and Y, the researcher chose two editors on the first day in the newsroom. The decision was made by attempting to find different personalities, different beats, different ages or different genders. This decision was made in an attempt to find diverse data. At paper Z, the editors chosen were the only two editors who fit the research criteria: assigning editors in news, not features or sports.

There are generally more reporters in a newsroom than there are editors, so it stands to reason that more reporters should participate to be able to fully understand the variety of relationships. Reporters were chosen based on either presence in the newsroom on the first day because they were observable, or if they were bureau reporters, by the researcher looking for a variance in types of relationships. Because bureau reporters rarely see the editor, it was decided that they might provide a different perspective. Two to three reporters of each editor were selected. The varying number was based on the number of reporters an editor had, and also willingness to participate and time available.

**Interviewing research participants**

To collect the data, the researcher traveled to each participating newspaper, spending four days at each. Though the researcher went in planning to have separate observation and interview days, these ended up overlapping. Interviews were conducted during breaks when a reporter or editor had time.

At Paper X, the researcher interviewed two editors and five reporters. At Paper Y, the researcher interviewed two editors and four reporters. At Paper Z, the researcher interviewed two editors and five reporters. Altogether, six editors and 14 reporters were interviewed, making a total of 20 interviews. During interviews, the researcher took
notes, while also audio recording all except one for accuracy. Eighteen interviews were conducted in person; the other two were over the phone.

At the time of the interviews, all participants were employees of their newspapers. Exact titles of the editors varied, but all were assigning editors and direct supervisors of their reporters. Reporters were a combination of beat and general assignment reporters.

Observing research participants

The researcher sat near the desks of the editors during observations. In most of the situations, the editors’ desks were near the reporters’ desks, but not always. This way, it was easy for the researcher to both see and hear the interactions that were occurring. The researcher was also allowed to attend meetings at each newspaper, including morning and afternoon news budget meetings, as well as some private meetings between editors and reporters. The observer never asked to observe meetings but always went when invited.

During observations, the researcher wrote field notes, either handwritten or on the computer, while also following a guide of certain things to watch for such as the setting, atmosphere, facial expressions and tone of voice during interactions between the reporter and editor. As often as possible, the researcher tried to write down exact dialogue.

Analyzing the data

As Charmaz (2001) states, the researcher aims to learn respondents’ implicit meanings of their experiences and will build an interpretive analysis of them. The analysis explains the process of the relationship between reporters and editors and attempts to find a correlation between it and productivity. All field notes and interviews were transcribed. To make sense of interview and observation field notes, the researcher coded the data using the constant comparative method.
The constant comparative method requires the researcher to inspect and compare all data. Each part of the data was analyzed throughout the research process (Silverman, 2010). In an attempt to generate theory, the researcher coded and constantly redesigned theoretical ideas as material was reviewed. Glaser and Strauss (1967) broke down the constant comparative method into four stages: comparing incidents applicable to each category, integrating categories and their properties, delimiting the theory, and writing the theory. The researcher closely followed Glaser and Strauss’s method by coding data into many different categories in the margins of the transcription and comparing all data in the same category. Memos were written throughout the research process. The researcher read through all the data and analyzed the transcripts for common themes. Analysis of observations and interviews consisted of making interpretations and then writing reports. To strive for validity, the researcher performed a comprehensive data treatment by generalizing only when all the data had been repeatedly inspected and the generalization applied to every bit of data (Silverman). There were seven categories during the constant comparative analysis. They were productivity, relationship, involvement, perception of relationship, reporters’ feelings, editors’ feelings and effect on productivity. There were concepts within each of those categories. Concepts for productivity included quantity, quality, location of story, use of time, story length, meeting deadlines, impact and being there when needed. Concepts for relationship included familial, professional, friends, team – collaborative, team – coach and tense. After coding all transcripts for the seven categories, the researcher looked at a clean copy of the transcripts and sorted the questions so they could be viewed next to each other and comparisons could be made. Then, the researcher looked at a third copy of the transcripts,
put reporters’ answers next to their respective editors’ answers and coded to see if their perceptions of each other were the same or different. After this, the researcher attempted to make generalizations and correlations.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

This study looked at the types of relationships between editors and reporters, how they regard each other personally, the desired level of editor involvement in a reporter’s work, how reporters and editors define productivity and whether their relationship affects productivity. It was expected that relationships between reporters and editors would have an effect on reporter productivity in the newsroom. The findings support this and show that though relationships vary dramatically — from professional to friendly — and though perceptions of the relationship are not always reciprocal, editors believe across the board their reporters are productive.

Six editors and 14 reporters — a total of 20 staff members, at three newspapers of varying circulation and staff size — participated in the study. The researcher used observation and in-depth interview methodology during one week at each newspaper.

To protect anonymity, letters of the alphabet were assigned to each paper, editor and reporter. Newspapers were labeled Paper X, Y and Z. Editors were labeled Editor A, B, C, D, E and F. Reporters were assigned both a letter and a number, and identifiers correspond with their editor’s identifiers.

For example, at Paper X, Reporter A1 reports to Editor A, and Reporter B2 reports to Editor B. At Paper Y, the two editors interviewed work with reporters together. So, reporters who work with Editor C and Editor D are referred to as Reporter CD1, and
Table 1. Reporter demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporter</th>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Time at newspaper</th>
<th>Time in current position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>6 – 10 years</td>
<td>1 – 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>6 – 10 years</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>6 – 10 years</td>
<td>6 – 10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>6 – 10 years</td>
<td>1 – 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD1</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>6 – 10 years</td>
<td>1 – 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD2</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>6 – 10 years</td>
<td>6 – 10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD3</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD4</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>11 – 15 years</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E1</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E2</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F1</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F3</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Editor demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Editor</th>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Time at newspaper</th>
<th>Time in current position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>11 – 15 years</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>60s</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>25 + years</td>
<td>11 – 15 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>25 + years</td>
<td>20 + years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>25 + years</td>
<td>11 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

so on. At Paper Z, identifiers are similar to Paper X: Reporter E1 reports to Editor E, and Reporter F3 reports to Editor F.

RQ1: How do newspaper reporters and editors perceive their relationships with each other?

Positive and negative interactions

Reporters and editors were asked in interviews whether they felt their interactions with each other were positive or negative. Interactions were found to be positive in most cases among all editors and reporters at the three newspapers. There were a few cases where reporters felt a “mix” of positive and negative interactions. When talking about a
Table 3. Opinions on interactions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporter</th>
<th>Reporter opinion</th>
<th>Editor</th>
<th>Editor opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Almost exclusively positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Very positive</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Positive most of the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Mostly positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Positive for the most part</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD1</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Mostly positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD2</td>
<td>Usually positive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD3</td>
<td>Mostly positive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD4</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E1</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E2</td>
<td>A mix, mostly positive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F1</td>
<td>99 percent positive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2</td>
<td>Generally positive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F3</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

positive relationships, four reporters expressed certainty in their answers, while five reporters showed hesitation by using modifiers such as “generally” and “usually” positive. All the editors described their interactions with the reporters as positive, but five of six used modifiers such as “for the most part” and “most of the time.” Through observations, the researcher also found that interactions were positive. No incident that could be construed as negative was witnessed.

When reporters were asked why the interactions are predominantly positive, they often identified favorable characteristics of their editors: an editor’s previous experience as a reporter, an editor viewing his or her staff as a team, an editor’s support of the reporter, an editor’s knowledge, an editor respecting the reporter, and an editor expressing confidence in the reporter and that reporter’s news judgment. Editors also identified attributes they brought to the relationship when describing the positive interactions. Editors made statements such as, “I have a positive attitude,” “If I am
disappointed, I try to reflect that in a positive, constructive way” and “I try to head things off before they become one of those difficult conversations.”

Five reporters listed negative interactions, but characterized them as rare. Negative experiences described by reporters included: lack of feedback, disagreements with an editor, and criticism from an editor.

Reporter CD3 described this situation with Editor D as an example: The two were yelling at each other in a conference room because the executive editor had a rule about covering a certain topic that Reporter CD3 disagreed with. She told Editor D she would not write stories about the topic because she felt it would compromise her integrity. Editor D told her the staff was too small to have someone with an off-limits topic, and they argued. Still, Reporter CD3 said she found a positive attribute in her editor. She felt the reason Editor D was upset was because he was worried about her, and he projected those concerns as anger.

He was concerned because he knew how sensitive the subject was for the editor, and he also knew that the big guys kind of hold me in good favor, so he was worried if I went in there and did not handle it properly. … We were both just stressed, so we were yelling. I would rather yell at an editor in a burst than have a fake nice relationship or have sort of a Cold War of we both don’t like each other (Reporter CD3).

When editors named negative interactions, they included: the tense position of an editor, how some reporters are prone to throw fits and their view that newsrooms are often a mix of volatile personalities.
I understand people don’t like being told what to do. People don’t like their boss most of the time. Nobody is going to expect everybody to like being ordered around, but sometimes you have to do it. So I understand when one of them calls the other and complains about me. I don’t care; I know that they do it. I am sure that I would do it in their shoes, too. I just understand that and move forward (Editor C).

Types of relationships

Throughout the constant comparative analysis, six types of relationships were identified.

- **Familial**: Relationships were coded Familial when either an editor or reporter commented on the editor in a parent-like role or the reporter in a child-like role.

- **Professional**: Relationships were coded Professional when the editor or reporter referred to each other exclusively in a newsroom role.

- **Friends**: Relationships were coded Friends when reporters or editors either used the word friend or listed attributes of friendship.

- **Team – Coach**: Relationships were coded Team – Coach when the reporter or editor perceived the editor as being a mentor to the reporter and providing guidance.

- **Team – Collaborative**: Relationships were coded Team – Collaborative when the reporter and editor felt they were on the same level and worked together.
• **Tense**: Relationships were coded Tense when the reporter and editor did not get along or there was hostility toward the other.

The reporters’ and editors’ descriptions of the relationships often fell into more than one type. Common combinations were Friends and Team – Collaborative and Friends and Familial. In an attempt to be consistent, the researcher analyzed the data and chose a single type that best fit the relationship based on interview responses. Although there were 14 reporters, 18 relationships were examined because reporters at Paper Y worked with both Editor C and Editor D. Sixteen of the 18 relationships could be categorized as “good.” The only two relationships that could be categorized “bad” were the Tense relationships. Observations showed that reporters and editors are often professional with each other, but there is still a sense of camaraderie that exists, with a good amount of joking and non-story talk.

**Reporter-identified relationships**

Overall, the top two relationships that reporters identified were Friend and Professional relationships. Four reporters identified the relationship with their editors as Friends. These reporters often talked about how much they enjoyed working with their editors. They also listed attributes of friendship such as joking around, socializing outside of work and talking about personal topics such as home life, health issues and gossip around the newsroom.

Four reporters identified the relationship as Professional. They listed characteristics such as cordial and respectful, and the reporters often based their interview responses about their editor in a work environment.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporter</th>
<th>Editor</th>
<th>Reporter identified relationship</th>
<th>Editor identified relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Team – coach</td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Team – coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Team – collaborative</td>
<td>Team – collaborative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Team – coach</td>
<td>Team – coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>Team – coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD1</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Tense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD2</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Tense</td>
<td>Tense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD3</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>Team – collaborative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD4</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>Team – collaborative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD1</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD2</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Tense</td>
<td>Tense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD3</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>Team – coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD4</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E1</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E2</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Team – coach</td>
<td>Team – coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>Team – collaborative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F3</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Team – collaborative</td>
<td>Team – coach</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Editor E] is incredibly competent. She has good people skills. She has a real commitment to what we are trying to accomplish here in print and online. … [The relationship] is professional. She’s not my best friend, you know? We don’t go hiking or biking or anything like that (Reporter E1).

Three reporters identified Team – Coach. Among the three reporters who identified their relationship as Team – Coach, they described their editors’ previous experience as a reporter as a factor in their trust.

He has so much knowledge himself, where it’s this great relationship where I turn in a story and I feel like, gosh, I don’t know that I have this. He can look at it and tell me you should double check this, or I don’t think that’s right, so you feel very confident that he’s backing you up and that you’re working as a team (Reporter A1).
Just one relationship was identified as Tense by a reporter. Reporter CD2 often described her two editors in unfavorable ways or mentioned the need for her editors to provide more communication. It should be noted that she works out of a bureau in another city, not in the main newsroom. When asked about her editors, she said:

Well, they both need to communicate more orally. They need to realize that we’re part of the staff in [the city]. They need to allow for more creativity in writing … have a greater understanding of time that goes into reporting and developing sources (Reporter CD2).

Though she described them as “good” editors, her answers used negative language when addressing communication such as, “We email a lot every day. Whether they respond is another matter,” and “I don’t always feel comfortable telling them I don’t have time for that.”

**Editor-identified relationships**

Editors looked at the relationship in a much more businesslike manner than reporters. All six editors described their relationships with their reporters within the context of a work environment. They used words such as “productive,” “honest” and “positive,” and described their reporters as “hard workers,” “easy to work with” and “showing mutual respect.” The most common relationship editors described were Team – Coach and Professional.

Four of six editors described their relationship with reporters as Team – Coach. They talked about pushing reporters and improving their writing skills. Those four editors used the word coach, as well as mentor or teacher. All six editors mentioned supporting their reporters, which is another aspect of the Team – Coach relationship. Another strong
indicator was the use of the word “champion” or “advocate” in terms of getting reporters’ stories onto the front page or defending them to higher management. Reporters agreed with this assessment in their interviews.

[Editor D] just has a lot of respect for his reporters, and he’s a big advocate for them. Even some reporters who he doesn’t have such a goofy relationship with, and some of them he has real tension with, he’s still an advocate for them, he still wants their stories on the front page, he’s still campaigning for bonuses for them even though that’s never going to happen (Reporter CD3).

Editors have many reporters, and therefore they have many relationships. Five of six editors had different relationships with their reporters. For example, Editor A had a Professional relationship with Reporter A1, a Team – Coach relationship with Reporter A2, and a Team – Collaborative relationship with Reporter A3. Only Editor E had the same relationships with her two reporters, and they were both coded Professional. Most editors acknowledged the differences in the relationships, and many said it was purposeful. There was a sense of tailoring their interactions depending on which reporter they were working with.

I’m not a sports man, but I know enough to imagine myself as a coach. Like all of us, I measure the people I deal with. I don’t do it on some defined scale, I don’t try to see how they fit in, but you develop a sense of what individuals, person by person, need to be productive and to succeed and you have to recognize that one size absolutely does not fit all (Editor B).

Editor C identified her relationship with Reporter CD1 as Tense, though the reporter characterized it as Professional. The editor said she thinks Reporter CD1 does
not respect her as much as he respects Editor D, the co-editor, and she said she believes Reporter CD1 regards her as “non-existent.”

I would say [the relationship] is limited. For example, [Editor D] had asked [Reporter CD1] about something, and [Reporter CD1] sent only [Editor D] the email, whereas most reporters send it to both of us. He only calls [Editor D]’s phone. … He doesn’t often contact me instead of [Editor D]. If he can’t get a hold of [Editor D], he’ll just let it go (Editor C).

Outliers

No relationship fit the Family type. At Papers X and Y, Editor B and Editor D described themselves as having a paternal role, and Reporter B2, Reporter CD1 and Reporter CD4 described their editors as occasionally acting as work father figures, but it was not the dominant descriptor in any of the interviews.

I do think [Editor B] almost takes on a dad role in a way. He’s very supportive in that way, and I think some editors might be more clinical in their approach, so I think that’s the difference that you have with [Editor B]. Like, he looks at everyone on his team as his kids almost, and he has a lot of personal responsibility and feels a lot for what we’re producing, too, so you know that your editor is as invested in your stuff as you are (Reporter B2).

At Paper Y, Reporter CD1 said his editors were like family, even though he is a bureau reporter and only sees his editors three or four times a year.

It’s a warm relationship, sort of distant family, if that makes sense. Like relatives, you talk to them; they’re caring people. [Editor C] sends stuff at Christmastime;
[Editor D] goes overboard to make sure we have what we need. I mean, really, it’s just making us comfortable (Reporter CD1).

Reporter CD4 described it in a similar, but somewhat less favorable way. She said it was like an “extended crazy family” with an overabundance of “crazy uncles” who are all gathered for a holiday dinner every day, and there is constant arguing and crying. She said Editor D can be the “crazy uncle” sometimes, and Editor C is a calming presence.

**Relationship perceptions**

As seen in Table 4, reporters and editors often do not perceive their relationship in the same way. In eight instances out of a total of 18 relationships, the reporter and editor identified the same relationship type. Of those relationships, three were coded Professional, two were coded Tense, two were coded Team – Coach, and one was coded Team – Collaborative.

Of the 10 instances where the relationship perception differed, three reporters’ descriptions of their relationships were coded Friend, while the editors’ descriptions were coded Team – Collaborative. These relationships are close in spirit. Both imply working together and being part of a team, but a Friend relationship was coded when attributes of friendship were named, which editors did not do.

Five relationships differed dramatically in perception. Reporter CD1 reporter described the relationship as Professional, while Editor C described it as Tense. Two relationships differed when the reporter described it as Friends and the editor described it as Team – Coach. Reporter CD3 described a Friends relationship with Editor D; he described the relationship as Team – Coach, but he did say they often joke with each
other. Reporter F3 described his relationship with Editor F as Team – Collaborative, but Editor F defined it as a Team – Coach relationship. These reporters who described the relationship as Friends or Team – Collaborative were more likely to perceive their editors as close to the same status they have, but editors saw themselves as a superior.

**Reporters’ attitudes toward editors**

Reporters were asked to describe how they felt about their editors. Eleven codes were used in the constant comparative analysis to measure the feelings. Nine of the codes tilt positive: Like, Value, Respect, Trust, Appreciate, Fear of Disappointing Editor, Editor is Good at Job, Editor is Supportive, and Editor is Understanding. Two of the codes tilt negative: Pressured, Editor Needs to Change.

- **Like**: Feelings were coded Like when a reporter used the term “like,” considered their editor a friend or expressed pleasure in working with their editor.

- **Value**: Feelings were coded Value when a reporter used the term “value.”

- **Respect**: Feelings were coded Respect when a reporter used the term “respect.”

- **Trust**: Feelings were coded Trust when a reporter used the term “trust.”

- **Appreciate**: Feelings were coded Appreciate when a reporter used the term “appreciate” or said they are grateful for their editor or the way their editor improves a story.

- **Fear of Disappointing Editor**: Feelings were coded Fear of Disappointing Editor when a reporter indicated they did not want to disappoint or let their editor down.
• **Editor is Good at Job**: Feelings were coded Editor is Good at Job when reporters talked about their editor’s competence at editing or managing.

• **Editor is Supportive**: Feelings were coded Editor is Supportive when a reporter used the term “support” or talked about an editor “having my back.”

• **Editor is Understanding**: Feelings were coded Editor is Understanding when a reporter used the terms “understands” or “gets it.”

• **Pressured**: Feelings were coded Pressured when a reporter used the term “pressure.”

• **Editor Needs to Change**: Feelings were coded Editor Needs to Change when a reporter listed ways an editor could improve when not specifically asked.

When analyzing the data, the researcher assigned more than one code to each reporter because there was not a single code that could fit a reporter’s attitude toward an editor. All 14 reporters described editors who fit the code of Editor is Good at Job. This was characterized by statements such as these: An editor knows how to work with copy, an editor knows how to manage people, and an editor knows what makes a good story. Twelve reporters described editors who fit the code of Editor is Supportive. Eleven reporters described editors who fit the code of Like, and 11 fit Respect. Nine reporters’ responses about feelings fit the code of Editor is Understanding. Five reporters fit the code of Fear of Disappointing Editor.

When [Editor F] is critical, I take it very personally. It sort of wounds me because he is a friend, and he’s almost always right. … It makes a big difference because I
### Table 5. Reporters’ attitudes toward editors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporter</th>
<th>Like</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Respect</th>
<th>Trust</th>
<th>Appreciate</th>
<th>Fear of disappointing editor</th>
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do like him and respect him a lot. … Like I said, since we are friends and I do value his opinion, I think I work harder at times to avoid disappointing him (Reporter F2).

Reporter A2 said she would quit the news business if she did not have an editor she enjoyed working for. When Editor A had other job prospects, his reporters asked his bosses to do anything possible to keep him at Paper X because they could not imagine losing him as an editor.

I can’t even imagine what it would be like to come into work every day and not respect the person you’re working most closely with. It would be awful because this is what we do for a living and we care about these stories, so it’s sort of invaluable to have someone like [Editor A] who I look forward to seeing everyday and laughing with (Reporter A3).
Reporters often felt quite positively about their editors, but some expressed disappointment that their editor does not spend more time with them.

I also want her attention so that I can get the feedback I need for something I’m working on because if I get the attention of an editor, it’s going to be better. … I don’t get that as much as I want. … I think we’re all fighting for as much time as we can get to have meaningful feedback or input on the front end (Reporter E2).

Reporter B1 said she respects and admires Editor B and thinks he is supportive, but she wonders if he puts the same amount of pressure to produce on other reporters that he puts on her. Reporter CD2, whose relationships with Editors C and D were coded as Tense, said she trusts her editors not to “mess up her copy,” but there is a lot of room for improvement in their management. When asked how she felt about her editors, Reporter CD2’s response was coded Editor Needs to Change. She gave a list of ways they needed to change, which varied from more communication to allowing more creative and investigative writing.

Editors’ feelings about reporters

Editors were more likely to describe their reporters based on their work, rather than their personalities.

Eight codes were identified to describe how editors felt about their reporters.

- **Like**: Feelings were coded Like when an editor used the term “like” or expressed enjoying working with their reporter.
- **Value**: Feelings were coded Value when an editor used the term “value.”
- **Respect**: Feelings were coded Respect when an editor used the term “respect.”

38
Table 6. Editors’ attitudes toward reporters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Editor</th>
<th>Like</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Respect</th>
<th>Trust</th>
<th>Appreciate</th>
<th>Reporter is good at job</th>
<th>Reporter needs support</th>
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</table>

- **Trust**: Feelings were coded Trust when an editor used the term “trust.”

- **Appreciate**: Feelings were coded Appreciate when an editor used the term “appreciate.”

- **Reporter is Good at Job**: Feelings were coded Reporter is Good at Job when editors talked about their reporter’s competence at reporting or writing.

- **Reporter Needs Support**: Feelings were coded Reporter Needs Support when an editor used the term “support” or said a reporter needed a lot of guidance.

- **Reporter Needs to Change**: Feelings were coded Reporter Needs to Change when an editor listed ways that a reporter could improve when not specifically asked.

All six editors classified reporters into the codes of Reporter is Good at Job and Reporter Needs to Change. Five editors put them in the Respect and Reporter Needs Support codes. Three editors put their reporters in the Like code.

The codes most referred to by editors related to job performance. When the Reporter Needs to Change code was identified, the desired change encompassed
everything from the reporter needs to be less obstinate, to the reporter needs to stop being negative, the reporter needs to meet deadlines, the reporter opposes higher management and the reporter needs to be more open to a digital approach. When a description fit the Respect code, five editors used it in a way that described both respect for the reporter and the way the person did his or her work.

Asked how they think their editors feel about them, reporters generally thought their editor felt the same, but they would then modify that answer with a hesitant “hopefully” or a joking “I hope!” For the most part, editors did feel the same way reporters did, but they were more likely to be aware of shortcomings of a reporter.

**Interactions between editors and reporters**

Reporters and editors were asked what their most common interactions they had with each other were.

It took me by surprise. I didn’t realize how much interaction there was between editors and reporters. Going into it, I had the sense of you produce it, you hand it to the editor, who does their own thing, and that’s it. But there’s so much back and forth. … There’s so much of that going on, which I think is great, and that makes a really good quality product that I never even realized. And [Editor B] is good on all that stuff (Reporter B2).

Seven codes pinpointed the responses of what interactions were most common between a reporter and an editor.

- **Checking In**: Interactions were coded Checking In when a reporter or editor talked about seeing what story a reporter is working on, figuring out when the story will be done and asking how the story is going.
Table 7. Common interactions identified by reporters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporter</th>
<th>Checking in</th>
<th>Guidance</th>
<th>Breaking News</th>
<th>Personal Talk</th>
<th>Small Talk</th>
<th>Soundboard</th>
<th>Joking</th>
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</table>

- **Guidance**: Interactions were coded Guidance when a reporter receives help or direction from an editor.

- **Breaking News**: Interactions were coded Breaking News when an editor and reporter interact after news breaks.

- **Personal Talk**: Interactions were coded Personal Talk when a reporter or editor used the term “personal” or said they talk about issues relating to personal life.

- **Small Talk**: Interactions were coded Small Talk when a reporter or editor used the terms “small talk” or “gossip” or said they sometimes talk about entertainment and similar topics.

- **Soundboard**: Interactions were coded Soundboard when reporters talked to their editor to “bounce ideas off” them and talk through their thought process.
Table 8. Common interactions identified by editors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Editor</th>
<th>Checking in</th>
<th>Guidance</th>
<th>Breaking news</th>
<th>Personal talk</th>
<th>Small talk</th>
<th>Soundboard</th>
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- **Joking**: Interactions were coded Joking when a reporter or editor used the terms joke, sarcasm or banter.

All 20 reporters and editors said their most common interactions had to do with Checking In on a story. Observation supported this. The second-most common interaction codes cited by four reporters were Small Talk, Guidance and Soundboard. The second-most common interaction codes cited by three editors were Guidance and Personal Talk. The reporters and editors who cited Small Talk said it was not a significant percentage of their interaction. Joking was rare, with only two reporters and one editor identifying the interaction, but interacting after Breaking News arose was the least common, identified only by Reporter CD1.

Reporters and editors were asked how they usually communicate with each other. Eleven reporters and all six editors said their most common form of communication is face-to-face conversation. The exception was the two bureau reporters at Paper Y, where editors more often use phone or email depending on the reporters’ preference, and Reporter E2, who said she more often emails with her editor because that is what Editor E prefers.
Reporters and editors were also asked how often they communicate each day. The number of times reporters and editors said they talk to each other varied widely and contradicted observed behavior. The average number of times reporters counted talking to their editors was three to five times a day. Newsroom observations, however, showed that they had three to five serious conversations about direction of the story, but the reporters and editors were communicating constantly with quick statements and emails to each other throughout the day. Editors were more cognizant of their communication level and reported daily conversations anywhere from zero to 50, depending on the day.

Reporters in bureaus do not communicate as often with their editors because they lack the face-to-face opportunities to chat. The bureau reporters at Paper Y, Reporters CD1 and CD2, said they desired more communication, and their editors do realize that. There is some misunderstanding, though. Reporter CD2 said her editors do not talk to her enough and do not always respond to emails. Editors C and D both described “constant communication” with Reporter CD2, sometimes 20 emails a day with two or three phone calls, but said the reporter is never satisfied.

The physical location of the editor’s desk is important. At all three newspapers, editors sat at a desk in the newsroom near their reporters, not in a separate office. Reporters often stopped by the desk to ask a fast question of their editor, and even yelled across the desk to share funny anecdotes or share quick statements about their stories.

Five codes were used to identify an editor’s involvement with a reporter.

• **Guidance:** Involvement was coded Guidence when a reporter or editor said they like help and direction in the beginning of a story. Guidance is often only provided when requested.
• **Autonomy**: Involvement was coded Autonomy when a reporter or editor credited the reporter working independently, without the editor telling them what direction to go with a story or what story to write.

• **Hands-on**: Involvement was coded Hands-on when a reporter or editor said they like help throughout the story process. This differed from Guidance in that editors might insert themselves into the story a more often even when they are not asked.

• **Hands-off**: Involvement was coded Hands-off when a reporter or editor said the editor leaves the reporter alone while interviewing and writing, but will provide support or guidance when the editor deems it necessary.

• **Feedback**: Involvement was coded Feedback when a reporter or editor said they like constructive criticism provided in the middle or end of a story draft.

**Reporter preferences for editor involvement**

In an ideal world for reporters, the “best” involvement from their editors would be guidance in the beginning, autonomy unless they need support in the middle, then feedback at the end. The leading preference is for editors to lean more toward being hands-on and providing guidance than leaving reporters on their own to figure things out.

Reporters were asked what kind of direction or involvement from an editor works best for them. Eleven reporters cited Guidance and expressed a desire for help in deciding where to go with a story.
I start so many things that I need someone to say OK, sit down, focus on and get this one thing done first. Like, I don’t have a road map. I need an editor to give me a road map, and what to focus on and how to get there (Reporter B1).

A Hands-on editor is preferred to a Hands-off editor, with seven reporters citing Hands-on preference, and only one citing the Hands-off preference. Six reporters cited Autonomy, but generally just preferred choosing what stories they write or being left alone when they are writing.

All 14 reporters said their editor does not have enough time to work with them because of the number of reporters editors must supervise. They said they would like to be able to talk through things with their editor more often.

All editors recognized their reporters’ desire for more time, but said the time crunch of editing stories, working with multiple reporters and handling managerial issues cut deeply into the time allotted for in-depth discussions with reporters. The reporters

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Table 9. Reporter preferences for editor involvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporter</th>
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Table 10. Editor preferences for involvement

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<th>Editor</th>
<th>Guidance</th>
<th>Autonomy</th>
<th>Hands-on</th>
<th>Hands-off</th>
<th>Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

understood this and blamed it on the financial state of the news industry, but they still expressed frustration and wished it were different.

Only Reporter CD3 said she liked a completely Hands-off editor who gives her Autonomy. She said she does not like when an editor has an idea for a story and will not let go of it. Often through her reporting, she finds information that takes the article in a new direction, and she wants her editors to trust her judgment and institutional knowledge of the situation. This could be said for most reporters, but Reporter CD3 emphasized this over any sort of need for Guidance. Her editors realize this — they said she does not do well on stories that are not based on her ideas.

**Editor preferences for involvement**

Editors were asked what kind of direction or involvement from them works best for reporters. The codes were the same: Guidance, Autonomy, Hands-on, Hands-off and Feedback.

All six editors cited Guidance as their leading preference of involvement. The next most common codes, cited by three editors each, were Hands-on and Feedback. Editors said they tailored their involvement depending on the reporter. Editor F said Reporter F1 began her job needing a Hands-on editor, and now that she has been working at the newspaper for longer, he said his involvement with her has evolved to Guidance.
Editor F said Reporter F2 does not like the editor to hover, but the reporter respects the editor’s attention when he has a question, and Reporter F3 likes a lot of personal contact. So he takes the step to work with each differently. Editor C also said she works differently with each reporter, especially when reporters want Autonomy. She was the only editor to cite Autonomy, but said she provides a lot of Guidance.

We generally don’t tell people what to ask most of the time, just kind of a where we’re headed with it. Like [Reporter CD1] mot of the time, he wants and needs very specific instructions on things and to go over it multiple times, but with [Reporter CD4] you would waste your breath. She will form her own idea about something, and it’s going to turn out how [Reporter CD4] wants it or not. It’s probably the same with [Reporter CD3], although she will listen to instruction (Editor C).

**RQ2: How does the relationship between a newspaper reporter and editor affect the productivity of the reporter?**

In RQ1, the three main types of relationships identified for reporters and editors were Professional, Friends and Team – Coach. RQ2 looks into the connection between the designated relationships and reporter productivity.

**Assessment of productivity**

Reporters were asked to describe how they spend a typical day by breaking it into percentages. Eight reporters said that 50 percent or more of their time is spent reporting. They said they generally use 30 to 40 percent of their time writing, and the rest on tasks such as research and monitoring, meetings and planning, computer use for fun, editing others and social media. Three reporters, Reporters B1, B2 and F3, said they spend 75 to
Table 11. Reporter use of time in percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporter</th>
<th>Reporting</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Research and Monitoring</th>
<th>Meetings and Planning</th>
<th>Personal computer use</th>
<th>Editing</th>
<th>Social media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
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<td>40</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD2</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD3*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>45</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E2</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F1</td>
<td>50</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Due to the nature of the interviews, some reporters were not asked this question.

90 percent reporting and 10 to 25 percent writing, which falls at the extreme end of the average percentages. This can be attributed to their beat, which calls for collecting a lot of information and writing a story quickly.

Not everyone said they spent more time reporting than writing. Reporter F2 said he spends 30 percent of his time researching online and monitoring his beat by attending city meetings, which many reporters put into the reporting category. Reporter CD1 said he spends 40 percent reporting and 60 percent writing.

Reporters were also asked to provide the number of articles they write per week. Several reporters and editors stressed that quantity is not the best measure of productivity, but it does play a role. Answers ranged from one to 15 per week. When a reporter gave a range answer, such as 1 to 5 articles per week, their answer was averaged to 3 articles per week. This made the actual range from 2 to 9.5 articles. On average, reporters said they produce 4.5 articles per week. When broken down by newspaper, the average changes
### Table 12. Amount of articles produced per week and opinions on productivity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporter</th>
<th>Editor</th>
<th># of stories produced</th>
<th>Reporter’s opinion</th>
<th>What reporter thinks editor’s opinion is</th>
<th>Actual editor opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1 – 5</td>
<td>Enough</td>
<td>Enough</td>
<td>Enough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Enough, too little</td>
<td>Enough</td>
<td>Enough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>2 – 3</td>
<td>Enough</td>
<td>Enough</td>
<td>Enough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>2 – 3</td>
<td>A lot</td>
<td>A lot</td>
<td>A lot, a lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Too little, enough</td>
<td>Enough</td>
<td>Enough, a lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD1</td>
<td>C &amp; D</td>
<td>5 – 6</td>
<td>Too little, enough</td>
<td>Enough</td>
<td>Too little</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD2*</td>
<td>C &amp; D</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD3</td>
<td>C &amp; D</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Enough</td>
<td>A lot</td>
<td>Enough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD4</td>
<td>C &amp; D</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Enough</td>
<td>Enough</td>
<td>Enough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E1</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>5 – 8</td>
<td>Enough, a lot</td>
<td>Enough</td>
<td>Enough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E2</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>6 – 8</td>
<td>Enough, a lot</td>
<td>Enough, a lot</td>
<td>A lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>9 – 10</td>
<td>Enough, a lot</td>
<td>Enough, too little</td>
<td>Enough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>7 – 8</td>
<td>Enough</td>
<td>Too little</td>
<td>Enough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F3</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Enough, a lot</td>
<td>Enough, too little</td>
<td>Enough</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Reporter CD2 refused to answer the question.

Dramatically. At Paper X, which has the largest staff size, reporters produced an average of 2.5 articles per week, though some said they write smaller briefs that they do not count as articles. At Paper Y, reporters produced an average of four articles per week, and at Paper Z, which has the smallest staff size, reporters wrote an average of 7.5 articles per week. Editors were asked how many articles a reporter should write per week, and they said it depends on the beat and type of story.

Reporters were then asked whether they thought the number of articles they write per week is too little, enough or a lot. They were allowed to give more than one answer. Most reporters said they usually feel good about their workload, but depending on the week, they can sometimes feel dissatisfied or overambitious. Four out of five reporters at Paper Z said it feels like they do a lot, but they generally phrased it so blame was not
placed on anyone. Reporter E1 said it is just a demanding job; Reporter F1 said it just feels like a lot when she wishes she had the time to write a longer, more in-depth piece; Reporter F3 said it feels like a lot when he wants to dedicate more time to making an article readable.

Reporters were also asked whether they think their editors would say they write too little, enough or a lot. Reporters generally thought their editors were happy with the amount they write, and based on editor responses, they were usually correct about that assumption. Most editors said their reporters are productive, except for Editors C and D when talking about Reporter CD1. Reporter CD1 self-identified as writing five to six articles per week, which he called a light-to-medium workload. The other reporters at his paper said they wrote three to four stories per week. So, though Reporter CD1 estimates his article count is higher than the others and feels his editors think he does enough, he was the only one Editors C and D described as unproductive. Editor C said the reporter does not have the capabilities to produce a lot of content quickly and that he might not be cut out for the journalism profession. Editor D suggested a reason for Reporter CD1’s lack of productivity.

I think I know the reason for it. When [Reporter CD1] started, I told him we don’t have quotas here, and I don’t want you to cover every meeting in your area or everything that moves, just pick the bigger impact stories and the stories of statewide significance. I think he took it more literally than the others. … I think partly it’s because he doesn’t really understand the expectations we have, and I don’t want to come down too hard on him because it makes him nervous, so it’s never been totally successful (Editor D).
The reporters at Paper Z under Editor F said they wrote the highest number of articles, an average of 8 per week. Reporters F1 and F3 said they write “enough,” but it leans toward “a lot.” Reporter F2 chose “enough” to describe his output. Yet, though they felt this way, Reporters F1 and F3, who lean toward “a lot,” said they believe their editor would say “enough,” leaning toward “too little,” and Reporter F2, who chose “enough,” said he believes his editor would choose “too little.” In fact, Editor F thinks they are all very productive.

Another attempt to measure productivity was length of time it takes to write an article. Reporters were asked how long it takes to write an article, and editors were asked how long it should take to write an article. Reporters and editors stressed that it depends on the type of story. From a 15-minute crime brief to a yearlong investigative project, it turned out to be too difficult to determine the average time spent on a single story. Reporters gave ranges from three hours to five days, and most editors could not give a concrete number. The inability to come to a conclusive decision made it impossible to include this measure.

For this study, the research looked to highlight how reporters and editors define productivity in their own newsrooms. Productivity can have varying measurements depending on the priorities of each organization. In the constant comparative analysis, nine codes were found for the definition of productivity.

- **Quantity**: The definition of productivity was coded Quantity when the number of bylines or articles was the measurement.

- **Quality**: The definition of productivity was coded Quality when the quality of a story was the measurement.
• **Location of Story**: The definition of productivity was coded Location of Story when the story’s placement on A1 or Sunday A1 was the measurement.

• **Use of Time**: The definition of productivity was coded Use of Time when the contribution of a reporter during work hours was the measurement.

• **Story Length**: The definition of productivity was coded Story Length when the length of a story in inches or words was the measurement.

• **Meeting Deadlines**: The definition of productivity was coded Meeting Deadlines when the ability to meet deadlines was the measurement.

• **Impact**: The definition of productivity was coded Impact when a story characterized as having impact, hard-hitting or important to the community was the measurement.

• **There When Needed**: The definition of productivity was coded There When Needed when pitching in to help was the measurement.

• **Knowledge of Beat**: The definition of productivity was coded Knowledge of Beat when mastery of a beat, knowing what was going on in a beat or staying on top of a beat was the measurement.

**Reporters’ definition of productivity**

Ten reporters cited the Use of Time productivity measurement. That could mean staying busy, meeting with sources to build relationships, prioritizing and planning their day, going through documents in search of a story and just “doing the most with the time I have.” The second most common measurement among reporters was Quantity, but those
eight reporters said they did not think quantity is as important as many of the other factors, but acknowledged that it plays a large role.

I guess the classic answer would be how many stories you get into the paper, but I might expand on that to say that’s true, but it’s also what you do when you’re not working on a story. So, I would say going out to have coffee or a drink or lunch with a source. Even if you’re not working on a story, you’re working on finding a story to start working on. So, there’s a lot you can do when you’re not actually reporting to still be productive (Reporter A3).

The other common productivity measurements were Quality, with five reporters citing it and Location of Story, with four reporters citing it.

Editors’ definition of productivity

The most common productivity measurements among editors were Location of Story, Quantity and Use of Time. Editors said they place a premium on A1 stories and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporter</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Time Use</th>
<th>Story Length</th>
<th>Meeting Deadlines</th>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>There when needed</th>
<th>Beat Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>A2</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>-</td>
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</tr>
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<td>CD1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
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</tr>
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<td>✓</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
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</table>
Table 14. Editor measures of productivity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Editor</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Time use</th>
<th>Story length</th>
<th>Meeting deadlines</th>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>There when needed</th>
<th>Beat knowledge</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

especially on Sunday A1 stories. It should be noted these stories are often ones with a lot of impact in the community, according to some editors. Editors also acknowledged quantity, but like reporters, they stressed that they do not have quotas and the number of articles alone cannot determine productivity. “You can write 12 briefs and we won’t care as much and won’t place as much value on it as we would if you’re writing 1A stories on an important topic,” Editor C said.

Editors D and F were not in general agreement with the most common codes of productivity. Three other editors gave measurements that fit the Use of Time code, but it was the only code that Editor D said was a productivity measure. Though no reporters mentioned Knowledge of Beat as a measure of productivity, three of the six editors said it plays a part. “I would say that expertise on their beats is a measure of productivity because the more they know about their beat, that means the more they have done to learn about it, study it and become experts,” Editor E said. Editor F’s main definition was use of time and knowing his reporters are working on something.

In general, reporters and editors were on the same page regarding productivity, except for the element of beat knowledge, which editors regarded as a more important
measurement. Though impact of stories was not the dominant measure, both groups mentioned it as a factor.

**Effect on productivity**

Twelve reporters agreed that their relationships with their editors have an effect on their productivity, no matter how they defined it.

When describing the effect, reporters said the relationship keeps them on their toes and the fact that their editor shares their excitement makes them more excited to write a story. It was a common opinion that they work harder to not let their editors down because they care about them and value them. Reporter CD3 said she pitches in more because she likes her editors, and some of the 12 reporters with “good” relationships said that because they have effective communication, it is easier to be productive.

Two reporters found their relationship could have a negative effect on their productivity. They said when they do not hear from their editor enough or if their editor is not checking in, they might be less productive because they do not have the pressure to produce. Reporter CD2, as established earlier in the study, feels she does not have enough communication in the bureau.

I see both sides of it. The negative effects are that I get depressed sometimes working alone because I don’t hear from anyone, so I start dwelling on that and doing other things to feel better. But on the other hand, I sometimes work extra hard to show that even though I’m out here and not in the bigger city, I can turn out the story that is as good or a better story as anyone (Reporter CD2).

Reporter A2 and Reporter B2, who both had “good” relationships, said they do not believe their relationship with their editor has an effect on their productivity. Of
those, one fit a Professional relationship, and the other fit a Friends relationship. Those reporters both said that they thought of themselves as self-motivated and have high expectations of themselves, so they are productive on their own regardless of their relationship with their editor. Reporter A2 said she knows when she is not being productive, and it is not Editor A who motivates her. Reporter B2 said she sees how it might have an effect, but she thinks if she had a poor relationship with her editor or did not like her editor, it would not change the work she does.

Even though these reporters feel this way, the relationship between a reporter and editor will have an effect on productivity. Self-motivation is a strong factor for these reporters, but both have good relationships with their editors, and both gave descriptions that fit the Respect, Appreciate, Editor is Good at Job, and Editor is Supportive codes. If they were not happy with their editor, they might have a different opinion.

No reporters said their editor was strict or similar to the cliché editor described in the introduction and literature review, but many said they have worked with that type of editor. Reporters A2 and E1 said they believe editor personality might make the reporter productive for a while, but productivity cannot be sustained in the long run because it is too stressful and reporters would relocate to a newspaper where they felt happy and appreciated.

All six editors thought the relationship absolutely has an effect on productivity.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

This study at three newspapers looked at how reporters and editors perceive their relationships with each other and whether they think their relationships affect productivity. Over the course of three weeks, 14 reporters and six editors at the three newspapers were observed and interviewed.

**Interactions/relationships are mostly positive**

Wheeler (1993) wrote that relationships between reporters and editors fall on a continuum between good and bad, and the relationships can involve many different issues, such as strategic, technical and interpersonal subjects. That was supported in this research.

When asked whether their interactions were mainly positive or negative, reporters and editors stated that their interactions were mostly positive. Out of 18 total relationships, 16 were classified as “good,” and only two relationships were “bad.” Even with a “good” relationships, some participants said there are occasional negative interactions.

Most reporters spoke about their editors in a favorable, personal way, and most editors spoke about their reporters in a favorable, work-related way. Reporters pointed to characteristics of their editors that help make a situation positive; editors, likewise, talked about their own strategies for maintaining a good relationship.
Wheeler gave recommendations for reporters and editors that included:
understand each other’s goals, roles and guidelines, communicate clearly, respect each
other’s abilities and accommodate each other’s expectations. These recommendations can
be applied to both reporters and editors, but the onus is on editors to strengthen the
relationship they have with their reporters.

Editors tailor interactions to specific reporters

Argyris (1974) described three types of reporters and two types of editors. The
roles of the reporter — traditional reporter, reporter-researcher and reporter-activist, can
still be applied today. His descriptions of editors, on the other hand, were not sustained.
Argyris described the controlling editor who is characterized by harshness and anger, and
the withdrawn and passive editor who is characterized by coldness and distance.

Neither of these editor roles were evident in this study. Editors were most often
open, friendly and talkative with their reporters, and again, they were generally well
liked. Editors should be wary of falling into an editor stereotype that is described in the
literature review, and should instead focus on being the type of person they would like to
work for.

Because relationships can be so different, many editors said they try to tailor their
interactions and relationships to each reporter, which sometimes depends on where the
reporter is located — newsroom or bureau. Editors said the way they interact with their
reporters also depends on the reporter’s beat, the preferences of a reporter, the availability
of an editor and the personality types of the two people involved.

This can be perceived as favorable because with a mix of different personalities,
editors can’t expect to have a one-size-fits-all relationship with every reporter. Editors
should be wary, however, of treating one reporter “better” than the rest or providing one reporter with more time than the others. Those behaviors could create hostility in the workplace.

**Reporters want more communication**

Reporters expressed a strong desire for more communication with their editors. Although the most common interaction observed and reported by all participants was checking in on a story, reporters want to spend more time talking with their editors.

Jeffers and Lewis (1989, as cited in Gade, 2004) found that journalists believed communication with their supervisors could be improved by increasing the frequency of conversations. Reporters who participated in this study supported that finding and wished they had more opportunities to sit down with their editor and talk about the direction of a story or what projects they could be working on in the next six months.

Small talk and banter might also prove effective in improving the relationship between editors and reporters. Those who had such interactions described a relationship that was more amicable than those who identified a strictly professional relationship.

Pease (1991) called communication “preventative maintenance” that allows managers to know managers know what their staff expects and staff to understand what their management expects. Greenman (2006) found that among the biggest managerial problems among frontline editors were giving direction, communicating expectations to staff and acting on poor performance.

This problem was uncovered at Paper Y. Both Editors C and D stated that they found Reporter CD1 to be less productive than the others, but they were reluctant to say anything to the reporter because it would make him “nervous.” With direct feedback that
communicates the editors’ expectations, the relationship could perhaps be improved, as well as productivity.

Mayfield and Mayfield (2012) found that using “leader motivating language” increases employee performance by 20 percent. Clampitt and Downs (1993) found that personal feedback significantly impacts productivity, and many employees say it motivates them to work harder. This was a sentiment shared among the reporters in this study, and receiving feedback was a desired level of involvement. Reporter A3 said he and Editor A often talk about a story idea together, then edit back and forth and collaborate on writing, structuring and shaping a story. Communicating changes in a story was an important editor skill that reporters mentioned. With the amount of feedback and guidance Reporter A3 receives from Editor A, for example, he said he believes the stories he writes are as much Editor A’s as they are his own.

Preferred involvement is hands-on guidance

Reporters place a great deal of importance on guidance from editors. When beginning a story, most reporters said they liked editors to help determine where to head in terms of angles and questions to ask. A few reporters clearly prefer to operate independently, but this was less common than a need for guidance and support. The ideal schedule among most reporters is involvement at the beginning of a story, followed by autonomy while writing it, and feedback after completing it. If this type of arrangement was not possible, reporters said they would much rather have a hands-on editor who provides some guidance than an editor who leaves reporters to figure it out on their own. Editors shared this opinion; most said they prefer giving hands-on guidance to reporters.
It was common for reporters to describe their editors as supportive and said that support is extremely important to them. Baruch-Feldman, Brondolo, Ben-Dayan and Schwartz (2002) found that immediate supervisor support is associated with productivity of employees. Editors can support reporters by showing trust in their news judgment, staying positive in interactions, pushing for good play of their reporters’ stories, understanding limitations, being honest and listening to a reporters’ work or personal concerns.

**Roles identified by reporters and editors and how that influences productivity**

Reporters regard their editors as friends, while editors regard their reporters solely within the context of work. In no responses did an editor ever refer to his or her reporter as a friend. Editors saw themselves as coaches and mentors.

Lurking behind this is an indication that reporters believe they are on the same level as their editors, while editors believe the relationship with reporters is based on the supervisor/subordinate model. Fisher (2000) wrote that if managers want to create a culture of contribution, they must give up some control and create a partner relationship rather than supervisor-subordinate. This could be key for newsrooms.

When asked how their relationships with their reporters affected productivity, five editors mentioned strategies they use to increase productivity or strengthen the relationship. They made comments such as these: “I think I make them more productive in affirming their work” (Editor B). “I perceive that most of our interactions are geared toward helping them be productive; they probably don’t realize that, but I’m very conscious about it when I’m doing it” (Editor C). “A lot of what I try to do is manage their lives in the room” (Editor E).
Only Editor D talked about a partnership between editors and reporters when addressing the effect on productivity. He said it is not a top-down relationship. He likes reporters to write about subjects they are interested in, and he wants them to feel like part of a team.

I like to think their productivity comes from our partnership, and if they don’t feel that way, then I’m a big flop because my intention is to be a partner and a collaborator, like I’m their coach. I’m not their dictator, but if they feel that I am, I wouldn’t be disappointed or angry at them, I’d be disappointed in myself because that’s not what I want to be (Editor D).

Productivity may be improved if editors acknowledge that the relationship with a reporter is a partnership. While reporters often perceive the relationship this way, editors often see it as one they manage or control. Editors are tasked with making the ultimate decisions, but to develop a strong relationship, reporters treated more often as equal partners could enhance productivity.

**Measures vary, but editors find reporters productive**

The definition of productivity varied, depending on the source. Responses ranged from the number or articles written to quality of stories to impact or play of stories. Though there was no consensus on measurement, editors felt overall that reporters are relatively productive. Just one editor described a reporter as unproductive.

When editors were asked what they would change about their reporters, most responses suggested changes in behavior. Ultimately, editors want reporters to fulfill their obligations. While reporters expressed a desire for a more flexibility from editors, editors
wished reporters would meet deadlines more consistently, be more receptive to higher management and authority, and approach their work with vigor and excitement.

**Editor-reporter relationship can undermine or enhance productivity**

Two reporters said they are sufficiently self-motivated to be productive on their own, but the rest credited the relationship with editors as a key to productivity.

All reporters declared that they like, value, respect or trust their editors. Because they like their editors, they also said they work hard to avoid disappointing them. Not surprisingly, editors who consider their reporters productive reflected this attitude.
CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

The study shows relationships can affect productivity, and editors can take steps to improve it. According to reporter responses, editors should communicate more, provide guidance and support, give feedback, and identify their relationship with reporters as partnerships. According to editor responses, reporters should make sure they are fulfilling their obligations so editors can perform the tasks of their job more effectively. If both reporters and editors realize that their relationships can affect productivity, they will be more likely to communicate their expectations and devise a plan based on a shared assessment of productivity and how to achieve it.

Though this study determined the expected outcome and supported previous research, it is important to understand the study’s limitations. It attempted to examine the editor-reporter relationship as a factor of productivity, but did not take into account any other variables of productivity. Those variables include beat assignments, shift schedules, staff size, and of course the measurement of productivity itself. Future research could study reporters on the same beat, focus on day or night reporters, observe and interview at newspapers with the same staff size, and focus on one measure of productivity.

All participants of the study were white, which meant the participant pool was not diverse. No steps were taken to see how gender played a role in relationships. Future
research could look at relationships to determine whether race or gender make a difference in the way reporters and editors interact with each other.

The bulk of research in this area focuses on how communication affects productivity. This study attempted to broaden the study into how the relationship as a whole affects productivity. This proved to be a difficult goal with the amount of research that was performed. Future research could look at other aspects of the relationship such as trust or respect and then determine the effect on productivity, or research could look at the relationship as a whole, but spend much more time on the topic of this study.

Ultimately, the study confirmed that the relationships between reporters and editors have an effect on reporter productivity. How much it affects it or what type of relationships lead to the highest level of productivity would require a much deeper study.
APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR REPORTERS

Sex:  F  M

Age:  20-30  30-40  40-50  50-60  60+

Race:  White  Black  Asian  Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander  Native American or Native Alaskan  Hispanic or Latino  Foreign born  Other

Length of time at paper:  Less than 1 year  1-5 years  6-10 years  11-15 years  16-20 years  21-25 years  25+

Length of time in current position:  Less than 1 year  1-5 years  6-10 years  11-15 years  16-20 years  21-25 years  25+

PRODUCTIVITY

How do you define productivity?

Walk me through a typical day for you at work.

In percentages, how do you spend your time? For example, 50 percent writing, 40 percent interviewing, 10 percent in meetings, etc.

How many articles do you write a day? A week?

Do you feel that is too little, or enough, or a lot? How does your editor seem to feel?

How long does it take you to write an article on average?

RELATIONSHIP

What are the most common interactions you have with your editor?

How often would you say you communicate with your editor?
How do you usually communicate with your editor?

Do you find your interactions to be positive or negative? Why?

Do you and your editor ever spend time together away from the newsroom?

Can you describe how you feel about your editor?

Can you describe how you think your editor feels about you?

How would you describe your relationship with your editor?

How do you think your editor would describe your relationship?

Can you describe how your relationship with your editor is different than other reporters?

If you could change something about how you work with your editor, what would it be?

What do you think your editor does well in their management? Poorly?

What do you think makes your job easier/harder? What kind of direction/involvement works best?

How do you think your relationship with your editor affects your productivity in the newsroom?
APPENDIX 2

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR EDITORS

Sex:  F  M

Age:  20-30  30-40  40-50  50-60  60+

Race:  White  Black  Asian  Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander  Native American or Native Alaskan  Hispanic or Latino  Foreign born  Other

Length of time at paper: Less than 1 year  1-5 years  6-10 years  11-15 years  16-20 years  21-25 years  25+

Length of time in current position: Less than 1 year  1-5 years  6-10 years  11-15 years  16-20 years  21-25 years  25+

PRODUCTIVITY

How do you define productivity?

How many articles do you expect a reporter to produce per day? Week?

How long should it take them to write an article?

What do you consider productive for a reporter?

Can you describe how productive you think your reporters are?

RELATIONSHIP

Can you tell me a little bit about your management style?

Can you describe the most common interactions you have with your reporters?

How often would you say you communicate with your reporters?

How do you usually communicate with your reporters?
Do you find your interactions to be positive or negative? Why?

Do you ever spend time with individual reporters away from the newsroom?

Can you describe how you feel about your reporters? (Ask about each specific one)

Can you describe how you think your reporters feel about you? (Ask about each specific one)

How would you describe your relationship with your reporters? (Ask about each specific one)

How do you think your reporters would describe your relationship?

Can you take each reporter and describe how you think you interact with each?

If you could change something about your reporters, what would it be?

What do you think your reporters do well when working with you? Poorly?

How does your boss’s expectations of you influence your expectations of your reporters? i.e. pressure to perform.

What kind of direction/involvement do you think works best?

How do you think your relationship with your reporters affects their productivity?
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