SMALL NEWSPAPERS, BIG CHANGES: AWARENESS OF MARKET-DRIVEN JOURNALISM AND CONSEQUENCES FOR COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS

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by

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

SMALL NEWSPAPERS, BIG CHANGES: AWARENESS OF MARKET-DRIVEN JOURNALISM AND CONSEQUENCES FOR COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS

Presented by Richard Robert Gross

A candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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

Glen T. Cameron

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John Wilmot

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This study examines the attitudes of journalists at small or community newspapers toward the concept of market-driven journalism, and its implications for content diversity in their newspapers.

The researcher queried 29 journalists with differing editorial responsibilities and experience at a convenience sample of nine community newspapers throughout the state of Missouri. The study presents the attitudes and beliefs of those journalists in their own words; relates their understanding of market-driven journalism and its effect upon audience diversity, the extent to which market considerations, audience diversity and the demographics of the newspapers' circulation area are reflected in the content of their newspapers.

The author employed qualitative method using several data sets to examine the possible relationship among certain phenomena related to the question of market-driven journalism at small newspapers.

The study concludes that journalists at small newspapers do have an understanding of the impact of market-driven journalism even when they do not identify it by that term, that financial considerations do have an impact on news coverage by these newspapers to varying degrees depending on the resources of the newspaper, and that community newspapers do not adequately represent the composition of their communities, particularly new and growing population segments.

Chapter One

Introduction

This study examines how journalists at smaller, community newspapers understand the somewhat academic concept of "market-driven journalism," and its implications for content diversity in their newspapers.

The author queried journalists with various editorial responsibilities and experience at a convenience sample of community newspapers throughout the state of Missouri. The study presents the attitudes and beliefs of those journalists in their own words; relates their understanding of market-driven journalism and its effect upon diversity, and how market considerations are reflected in the published product. The study also relates the extent to which that content reflects the demographics of the newspapers' circulation area and considers the market and diversity implications of that finding for the future of community newspapers and of journalism.

The study expands upon two secondary data analyses completed by this author and his co-authors on data initially gathered by a team of Missouri School of Journalism researchers at *The Los Angeles Times* (Gross, Cameron, Curtin, 2001; Gross, Craft, Cameron, Antecol, 2002). The original research and data collection have resulted in several publications of which the studies noted above are but two. Although not specifically intended to be comparative, issues similar to those examined at the large, demographically diverse *Times* are considered in this study in the community newspaper environment.

The distinctiveness of this study includes the nature and scale of the media venues studied, the depth of qualitative data, the breadth of the number of papers and

content examined, and the implications of the data for the broader issues of the influence of money, class and diversity on American journalism.

The author used qualitative method on several data sets to examine the possible relationship among phenomena related to the question of market-driven journalism at small newspapers.

The original data gathered included: 34 taped interviews resulting in 42 hours and in excess of 700 pages of transcribed material, and content analyses of more than 125 issues of newspapers sampled from the nine community newspapers throughout Missouri. Additional data analyzed came from the official U.S. Census Bureau year 2000 census for the United States, the State of Missouri and each of the eight Missouri Counties that were the publication homes of newspapers involved in this study. One County had two newspapers involved in the study.

Review of the data process suggested the following interrelated research questions:

1) How, if at all, is the concept of "market-driven journalism" perceived by editorial employees at community newspapers? For the purpose of this study, community newspapers were defined as follows:

a) They were not published nor marketed primarily in Missouri's two largest urban areas, St. Louis and Kansas City;

b) Whether daily or weekly, their single issue paid circulation did not exceed 20,000.

2) To what extent do financial considerations guide newspapers' coverage of their communities?

3) How well does the actual content of the newspapers reflect the composition and concerns of the respective communities?

In addition to the interviews with reporters, editors and owner/publishers, the content of each newspaper was examined, and then related to census data for the readership areas of the newspapers included in the study. A more detailed discussion of the methods employed by the author, along with a more expansive discussion of the nature of the research questions, can be found in the Chapter Three discussion on method.

A Conflict of Values

On March 20, 2001, Jay T. Harris resigned his position as publisher of the *San Jose Mercury-News* in what *New York Times* financial reporter Felicity Barringer wrote was a protest over the profitability goals set by the Board of Directors of the paper's parent company, Knight Ridder. Harris informed Knight Ridder executives that he could not accept the rigid budget targets because he believed these made layoffs inevitable (Barringer, 2001c).

In a subsequent address at the annual meeting of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, ASNE, Harris called on the group, which included some 200 assembled newspaper editors, to oppose the "tyranny of the markets" and to put the interests of readers ahead those of investors. Said Harris:

> I neither believe nor will accept that the current trend can't be changed, that the proper balance can't be restored, that the unwise is somehow unavoidable (Barringer, 2001c).

Harris acknowledged the tension between newspapering and profit-making and argued that the "moral, social and business dimensions" of that tension should be given equal weight.

Harris' remarks received a standing ovation.

Reacting to Harris' remarks, Knight Ridder Vice President for News Jerry Ceppos, himself a former editor of the *Mercury-News,* expressed frustration that "some people weren't looking at the journalism that Knight Ridder does or at the staff of the *Mercury News*."

In fact, Ceppos said, the fervor of Harris' *crie de coeur* notwithstanding, the paper had been the beneficiary of staff *additions* over the previous two years. Knight Ridder's profitability goals were not expected to result in *layoffs* of journalists, but rather a drop through attrition to 390 editorial staffers from the existing staff of 403, a loss of 13 positions.

Despite the loss of editorial staffers, however, The *Mercury-News* has enjoyed some editorial coups. It is the nation's first newspaper to publish editions in three languages: an English daily edition and weekly editions in Spanish and Vietnamese. The Spanish edition serves the nation's fourth largest Spanish-speaking audience, and the Vietnamese edition reaches an audience of 110,000. Overall, the paper reaches a daily audience of 800,000.

The newspaper has also won kudos for its online version of all three editions: the *Mercury-News*, *Nuevo Mundo* and *Viet Mercury*, which all can be accessed through the newspaper's primary site, www.mercurycenter.com. The paper also publishes nine targeted online service editions accessible through the same site.

In addition, the *Mercury-News* was named the nation's eighth-best newspaper in a recent issue of the *Columbia Journalism Review*, which wrote that the newspaper "just about patented coverage of the electronic revolution" in Silicon Valley. *CJR* also included the *Mercury-News* in its top 21 newspapers to watch in the 21st century list.

This suggests that editorial success can continue even in an environment of diminished editorial personnel resources. This editorial success is matched by recent financial success. *Mercury-News* parent corporate owner Knight Ridder stock gained 40 percent per share value between June 2002 and July 2003, from $51 to $71 per share. This gain far outpaced the performance of the major stock indices during a particularly volatile period and in a difficult business climate.

Still, this may be seen by some as anecdotal, the experience of only one atypical corporate newspaper owner. The tension continues between church and state in journalism. The nature of that tension is journalism's historically conflicted twin goals of functioning both as a successful business enterprise and an information resource for citizens in a representative democracy. Journalists are often perceived as championing newspapers' role as a diverse information source over the insistence of some newspaper owners that newspapers must thrive as a business in order to pay for the resources needed to fulfill its role as a diverse information source.

Business Success as a Core Value of Journalism

Newspapers are the end products of a business.

Most professional journalists and many Americans will react with ambivalence to that statement, agreeing with it while feeling uneasy in that agreement. The statement causes unease not just because Americans consider a variety of information sources to be essential to the health of a democracy. Journalism seems a higher calling in a republic founded on liberal principles, among them freedom of speech and of the press.

The newspapers involved in this study have paid, single-issue, weekday circulations under 20,000. They are relatively small newspapers and small businesses. However, the author has approached the research questions in this study, and the key concepts discussed throughout, within a broader context that includes the history and value of the newspaper in American life, and the history and value of diversity as a key element in American civic life.

The newspaper is a product that holds a revered place in American history and society for many. Any reverent attitude is a recent phenomenon and has wavered throughout American history. In England, newspapers may be filled with gossip and their mastheads may reflect that status and role. In much of the rest of the world, through much of history, newspapers have been state-controlled.

In the United States, the newspaper's historic role has been to serve as the manifestation of principles expressed in our Declaration of Independence and literally written into the First Amendment of the Constitution:

> Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; *or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press*; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Consequently, some journalists historically acknowledge only with regret that newspapers are business products. It should be remembered that newspapering in the United States has had many instances in which its information was less than accurate and its practitioners less than objective. Early twentieth century Yellow Journalism was as much a taint on journalism as the name suggests.

The objective journalism that followed is not the unbroken triumph of "All the news that's fit to print," to quote *The New York Times* masthead slogan. Early coverage of Senator Joseph McCarthy and the HUAC in the 1950s, the Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War and Watergate all failed initially to speak truth to the powers of the day. The *Washington Post*, which led the way in coverage of The Watergate scandal was itself humbled when it had to return the Pulitzer Prize won by reporter Janet Cooke in 1981 after it was learned she had fabricated the winning story Similar recent scandals have tainted equally revered examples of publishing, including *The New York Times* and *The New Republic.*

The content of the newspaper product has often been tested; so too has its business model. Newspapers as products have become increasingly more costly to produce. Simple newsprint, for example, is a large fixed cost estimated by Morton (1998) to account for 15 to 25 percent of operating costs. At the end of 1994, newsprint cost $425 per metric ton. That cost had remained more or less constant for 15 years (Gade, 1999). After a brief dip in cost during the recession-plagued early 1990s, newsprint prices began a steady rise upward in 1997. The cost rose to

$660 per ton by May, 2001 in a North American market that consumed 13.2 million metric tons in 2000 according to the Pulp and Paper Products Council of Canada, that nation's industry trade group.

From December, 1999 through May, 2000, newsprint prices rose four times. With some short-term fluctuations, it can be anticipated that the cost of newsprint will continue to rise over the long term. Labor, transportation and delivery costs continue to rise. Add to this the almost essential – and relatively recent -- need for a newspaper to have a presence on the World Wide Web in an online version. Many newspapers have established web divisions with an entirely autonomous editorial staff in recognition of the arrival of media platform convergence.

While capital and operating costs are great, personnel costs remain the single largest expenditure for most newspapers. In recent years, it has become a popular pastime to foretell the ultimate death of the American newspaper, in part because of either continually escalating costs, static or declining readership, or both.

Lichty (1992) was among the first scholars to demonstrate that an increasing proportion of news consumers were getting daily news from local and national television news instead of newspapers. Subsequent research has tended to confirm that initial observation (Lichty and Gomery, 1992, p.3), although television's dominance during the 1980s and early 1990s is meeting a challenge for news consumers from a new source, the Internet and its variety of news websites. This new source seems to have placed newspaper readership in even greater jeopardy.

The Iraq War, ongoing during the time this study was being written, was the first war in which the Internet became widely available and afforded news audiences

an additional choice among media sources, along with newspapers, television and radio. A recent article in *The American Journalism Review* noted 69 percent of respondents in a *Los Angeles Times* poll taken during March 2003 turned to one or several of the cable news networks for war coverage (Palser, p.62). Newspapers were the choice of 30 percent, while 23 percent followed war news on local television, and 18 percent via national television news provided by the three commercial broadcast networks. Thirteen percent of the respondents said they accessed their war news on the Internet (Palser, p.62). (The percentages do not total 100 percent because respondents were allowed to name up to three news sources.)

Contemporary news audiences may have a current preference for cable and broadcast television news and may be moving toward an equivalent if not greater preference for news that can be accessed online and on demand, particularly for coverage of fast-breaking events. Only time and increased Internet penetration can determine that. However, this development and others that seek to foretell a doomed future for the hardcopy newspaper overlook the historical importance of the newspaper in the establishment, growth and social history of America.

That the newspaper remains integral to "the American way of life" is demonstrated by the fact that 2,388 (U.S. State Department, 2004) of the 9,315 of worldwide newspapers are published in the United States (UNESCO, 1995). Also, the United States has the highest total daily newspaper circulation, 115 million, of any nation in the world. This is in spite of the fact that the United States is not the world's most literate industrialized nation, a dimension in which the United States is exceeded by the three nations of Scandanavia and Japan (National Literacy Trust, 2001).

Also, while the newsprint delivery system of the newspaper in the United States is clearly threatened by the rising cost of newsprint, the environmental concerns for the continued use of newsprint and the timeliness of traditional newspapers owing to mechanical modes of production, the traditional text function of the newspaper is not threatened. The means to deliver text is growing as a medium worldwide. As newspapers digitize and become available worldwide online, the delivery of news in text form should continue to grow, irrespective of the viewing platform or technology.

Despite the seeming controversy over the business role of newspapers, the American newspaper has historically been a successful business enterprise, gaining a return on investment that outpaces television, radio and, at least until the present, the Internet sites that have reportable earnings. As is being demonstrated in the present-day case of Knight Ridder, newspapers can continue to be a very *profitable* business, one that is highly valued by investors.

Its business success and investment value notwithstanding, many scholars, media practitioners and citizens continue to regard the American journalism enterprise that produces newspapers as a qualitatively different kind of business.

Newspapers have a long history in the United States. The first documented publication of a newspaper was *Publick Occurrences*, which published for only one day on September 25, 1690 before it was closed by British colonial authorities (U.S. State Department, 2004). Other newspapers sprang up to challenge British authorities and give birth to America's free-press tradition generally claimed to have been born with the trial of John Peter Zenger for seditious libel in 1734 (ibid.)

Newspaper journalism in America is not only a means of disseminating information to the public; its historic role has been to serve as the unofficial watchdog of America's Executive, Legislative and Judicial Branches of the Federal government. Newspapers serve a less prominent, but equally important role in civic life at the local government level. There is no better vehicle to perform this vital task than the local community newspaper

Newspaper journalism is an arena that should reflect American legal, civic and social progress. The newsroom should be a fitting place to "take the temperature" of American society, to measure the progress of The American Experiment and of America's diverse constituencies.

Diversity as a Core Value of Journalism

Concern for diversity is present in American journalism, though that concern may not always seem evident. Diversity concerns often find their way into the newsroom through legal and regulatory initiatives such as The Communications Act of 1934 as amended in 1996.

What best defines and expresses diversity in the practice of journalism has not been static. It has instead changed as a reflection of the social issues and political considerations prominent at different periods in American public life. These expressions can be categorized as being either historic or evolutionary.

Diversity of opinion, that is breadth of ideas or "voices," is a bedrock American principle because the American Republic was founded as a representative democracy, that is, government by the people as expressed by the individual

legislators representing major demographic and political constituencies. The intended result is a multitude of voices representing the range of the public's views on major issues.

The belief in a broad debate incorporating many sources of public opinion occupies a prominent place in the writings of the nation's founders. As James Madison stated in 1822:

> A popular government without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a prologue to a farce or a tragedy, or perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance, and a people who mean to be their own governors, must arm themselves with the power knowledge gives. (Madison, 1996, p. 481)

Or, as Jefferson stated succinctly: "Information is the currency of democracy."

The manner in which the principle of diversity of voices has traditionally governed media has been well-stated by McChesney:

> Democracy requires a media system that provides people with a wide range of opinion and analysis and debate on important issues, reflects the diversity of citizens, and promotes public accountability of the powers-that-be and the powers-that-want-to-be. In short, the media in a democracy must foster deliberation and diversity, and ensure accountability. (McChesney, p. 3)

McChesney offers three purposes for media in a democracy: to provide citizens with a wide range of opinion, to reflect the diversity of citizens and to promote public accountability of those in power (McChesney, p.6).

The right to provide the first of these was a long time coming and, perhaps for that reason, a free press is virtually synonymous with the notion of journalism in America.

Freedom isn't free. Nor is the successful operation of the businesses that newspapers have become. The financial pressures that plague all businesses have become an extreme threat to newspapers because Americans over the past two decades, and for the first time in history, have become a "post-literate' society. (Postman, 1986). By 1988, television had become the dominant source of news for most Americans. (Lichty, 1992).

This development could not have been foreseen by the Founders, not by the Courts, whose members have interpreted and built upon the desire of the Founders for a society in which a diverse set of viewpoints flowed freely through a diverse number of sources.

Diversity Then

The second of McChesney's purposes, that newspapers reflect the diversity of America's citizens, has yet to be fully realized. Practitioners and contemporary scholars cannot ignore the role of race, gender and ethnic heritage in discussions about journalism. We live in a society that champions individuality and aspires to equality of treatment toward those individuals of different ethnicities, nationalities and gender that constitute our social fabric. Research incorporating diversity considerations, including this study, often and rightly focuses on how representatives of the people are those entrusted with the responsibility of keeping our society informed through the crafting of media.

This was not always the case. Diversity in its purest Webster's Dictionary sense refers simply to "the condition of being different," not necessarily different and

representative. Crafting a media system that ensures access by a multitude of different voices that together represent the whole of American public opinion can be seen diverse in the definition's meaning, but perhaps not in its spirit.

There was little ethnic, national or cultural diversity in Colonial and Post-Revolutionary America. Gender roles were clearly defined in accordance with the custom of the times. In such a society, it is understandable why this era's notion of "diversity" would be defined in empirical terms of *quantity*: many communicators (printers and publishers) making available more messages (ideas and points of view) through many channels (publications) to a growing number of citizen receivers, most of whom shared similar demographic characteristics.

This perspective found expression most notably in a body of case law extending directly from a Constitution that valued a large quantity of voices as contributing most effectively to the functioning of a democracy. This concept of voice was expressed in The Communications Act of 1934 and subsequent legal interpretations of that document have interpreted media diversity as an important concept in which many broadcast outlets express multiple opinions with the goal of fueling public debate about issues of national significance.

The currently accepted view of diversity as consisting of elements of culture is a relatively recent phenomenon. The beginning of the 20th century witnessed a wave of European migration that changed the ethnic, national and cultural face of America. American mainstream journalism of the period was not focused on this story, but rather on the story of America's rise to world prominence. That prominence, successive waves of immigration from peoples and cultures worldwide, the legal

successes of the Civil Rights Movement and the changing role of women, have redefined America. Homogenous in its ideals and founding principles, its ethnic, national and cultural heterogeneity has grown steadily.

The definition of what constitutes "diversity" in the media has changed in a society in which communication technologies have rapidly expanded and many forms of ethnicity, nationality, and culture have become sprinkled throughout America and the world.

Diversity Now

For several decades and through several wars, American communication criticism and research took this mass, utilitarian, social psychological, audience effects, empiricist approach. This approach remains highly influential, though perhaps it does not represent the dominant strand in contemporary American communications scholarship.

There are several criticisms of transmission models of communication that are relevant to an alternative approach chosen for the current study., It is useful to focus on three strands of that criticism in discussing diversity: semiotics, post-structuralism and post-modernism, with attention to the way each informs the current study.

It is useful at this point to briefly review how we got here. The author does not in any way intend to present a definitive summary of the literature of these related fields. Rather, the purpose is to demonstrate that many disciplines have come to view terminology as the necessary starting point for the serious study of anything.

It is the author's position that journalism, too, needs to begin to apply the rules of systematic analysis to self-examination and to any discussion of those concepts that, like diversity, have come to play an important role in both journalism history and contemporary practice.

Semiotics is simply defined as the study of the social signs denoted by language. It was established in 1915 by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. He used the term to name a new field that would study what he referred to as social signs, what those signs consisted of and what laws governed them. Words were important, argued Saussure, because they become vital social and cultural constructs. (Saussure, 1971, p.33).

Semiotics is an example of the school of social philosophy known as structuralism. The basic premise of structuralism is that societies and sociological or cultural practices like language can be analyzed as social and cultural systems. Structuralist methods of analysis were applied in Saussure's study of linguistics, but also in the work of well-known social scientists like anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss.

Structural analysis replaces the individual with cultural structures as the focus of social analysis. The individual is seen as just one element. Diversity, according to this school of thought, must be defined broadly and studied in the context of its place in, and effect upon, the society as a whole.

Post-modernism has four primary characteristics: 1) lack of belief in a single truth; 2) distrust in the authority of scientific rationality and empiricism; 3) an

emphasis on individual experience and points of view; and, 4) the importance of culture.

Post-modernism has no clear founder, but is closely associated with the arts, particularly literature, wherein a text – in the case of journalism, ”the news” -- is believed to have no single truth being transmitted by its author. Instead the reader interprets a text in light of one’s own experience and cultural understanding.

This train of thought, though it does have its intellectual opponents, has had a profound effect on all social sciences, including communication and more recently, mass communication.

Its effect in journalism has been in part to create a reconsideration of the internal structures of the profession. Hence, diversity, which once meant only a multitude of different media voices, now refers also to social and cultural representation among those voices.

The practical effect of this shift is to result in the recognition of cultural components of the audience as necessary representatives of the communicators and the messages they craft and make available through channels. In other words, “diversity” in the newsroom should now empirically seek to reflect the social, ethnic and cultural constitution of the newsroom’s audience.

It is in this sense that the author considers diversity in this study, without taking a position on its rightness. Proponents of this interpretation of diversity include most prominent newspaper and broadcast journalism professional groups, including The Newspaper Association of America (NAA) and The American Society of

Newspaper Editors (ASNE), the newspaper industry's two dominant trade groups, and the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB). Other organizations champion the inclusion among practicing journalists of certain ethnic and cultural groups. These include The National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ), the Native American Journalists Association (NAJA) and the South Asian Journalists Association (SAJA).

This interpretation of diversity does have opponents. These have tended to be individual practitioners within the profession rather than organized opposition. These opponents believe that headcounts of diversity better reflect "political correctness" than a concern for better journalism. They point to instances such as the aforementioned plagiarism scandal involving reporter and defrocked Pulitzer Prize winner Janet Cooke at The *Washington Post* in 1981 and the recent plagiarism incident involving reporter Jayson Blair of *The New York Times* as proof the concern for representative diversity now outweighs the profession's concern for good journalism.

It is the author's contention that the concept of diversity requires more precise definition. Just as democracy exists in more than one form, so too does diversity. It can have both quantitative meaning in reference to diversity of information sources, and qualitative meaning in terms of who are the sources.

In his June 2003 dissent to the opinion of the court in *Grutter v. Bollinger*, better known as the University of Michigan Law School Affirmative Action case, Justice Thomas notes:

> Diversity, for all its devotees, is more a fashionable catchphrase than it is a useful term…. I refer to the Law School's interest as an "aesthetic." (Thomas, dissent in 539 U.S. 306, 2003, p. 52).

The author finds the term "aesthetic diversity" a somewhat pejorative term, but also appreciates the lack of sufficient precision in the term "diversity" as it has come be used in most walks of American life.

Therefore, the author proposes that "diversity" in its contemporary sense be referred to as "representative diversity" to more precisely identify the qualitative and cultural nature of diversity's present application. It is in this sense that the author addresses diversity throughout this study, except where otherwise noted.

A further discussion of the issue is contained in the author's conclusions and recommendations.

While the goal of this study is to focus on concepts like market-driven journalism and diversity, and their contemporaneous influence on the practice of journalism at small community newspapers, the author underscores the importance of the reader's consideration of these concepts as important components of journalism history; indeed, of American history.

It is the author's belief that Locke and Twain, *The New York Times* and *The Hannibal Courier-Post* all are branches on a tree that spring from similar rootstock: the "natural" and crafted laws that, in the course of the nation's history, have made American newspaper journalism a living, evolving and vital component of American society.

A Plan for this Study

As noted at the outset, the author's intention was to expand the work initially undertaken as two secondary analyses of interview data gathered at *The Los Angeles*

Times. These analyses sought to determine the extent to which market-driven concepts, which have been demonstrated to be clearly understood by editorial personnel at a major urban newspaper, are equally understood by editorial counterparts at small community newspapers.

Second, the author sought to determine the implications of the attitude toward market-driven concepts for diversity as it is practiced in smaller newsrooms and evidenced in the pages of community newspapers.

In Chapter One, the author has sought to introduce an overview of concepts relevant to the discussion: an historical overview of the evolution of freedom of the press, particularly as it applies to American journalism; and of press diversity, both as an empirical concept and as it has evolved into an expression of demographic representation.

Chapter Two reviews the literature of market-driven journalism, concentrating on the economic interpretations that have become popularized within the past decade. Diversity and the evolution of that concept is a second literature consideration.

Chapter Three details the methods employed by the author in the execution and completion of this study as well as a consideration of the methods employed in related studies and a justification for the author's approach.

Chapters Four through Seven are the heart of the original material gathered and analyzed for this study. The author presents information gleaned from a total of 33 interviews with editorial personnel and experts in demography and community journalism. Data are presented in the journalists' own words as organized by the author for the purpose of underscoring points of agreement, and differences, among

the respondents. The newspapers at which these personnel are employed are profiled. Content analyses of these newspapers are presented as well for the purpose of comparing the concept of diversity as it believed by the respondents to be practiced in their newspapers with its actual expression in the pages of their papers.

For the purposes of this study, the operative concept of diversity adopted is that of representation as discussed earlier. Therefore, the content analyses consider how newspaper content corresponds or does not to the constituencies of the paper's audience as determined by census data. The author reminds the reader that this study does not seek to make judgments nor assign value to representation as being synonymous with all definitions of diversity.

The author presents conclusions and offers discussion and recommendations in Chapter Eight.

Chapter Two

The Literature of Market-Driven Journalism

The literature of market-driven journalism in a newspaper environment can be viewed from at least three distinct perspectives: journalism, economics, and the interrelationship between the two. This interrelationship leads to questions of media ethics. Among the many possible issues concerning the media ethics component of market-driven journalism is its effect on diversity in the newsroom and, correspondingly, diversity's real and potential effect on journalism.

What is Market-Driven Journalism?

Much of the recent literature of market-driven journalism has been viewed from an economic perspective (McManus, 1988, 1992, 1994, 1995, Demers, 1996a, 1996b, 1998b). This may be due to the particular interests of researchers or the time frame during which much of the research has been conducted.

The past decade was a time of unprecedented financial growth and consolidation in the media industry, a process which may accelerate still more as a result of the June 2003 decision by the Federal Communications Commission to relax existing regulatory caps on newspaper and broadcast station cross-ownership in the same geographic market (FCC Notice of Report and Order, 2003). Interest in examining how growth and consolidation affect all sectors of the economy and of society is an understandably important area of research and is likely to expand.

The term market-driven journalism is generally attributed to McManus, who used it as the title of his 1994 book "Market-Driven Journalism: Let the Citizen Beware?"

In this book, derived from his doctoral dissertation, (McManus, 1988), McManus offers a microeconomic model of decision making by local television news management. McManus uses market-driven journalism to describe a mutually exclusive management emphasis on news financial profits over the quality of news product (McManus, 1994, p.168).

The term as used by McManus is notable for an approach that is mutually exclusive since contemporaries such as Underwood (1988, 1993) see the merging of content quality and financial concerns as inevitable, though not necessarily desirable.

McManus lays out a model of market-driven journalism based on the operations he observed in four local television newsrooms and discussions he had with local television news directors at those four stations. He states that the local television newsroom is the "best place to study" the phenomenon "Partly because it has been longest established there." (1994, p. 9). Perhaps as a means of justifying his reliance on data gathered only in local television, he adds that television is the "...least studied of the three major news media – the other two being newspapers and network newscasts." (1994, p. 9).

McManus noted at the time his book was published that, excluding his own, only three studies of local television news had ever been published in book form up to 1994: David Altheide's "Creating Reality" (1976), Ron Power's "The

Newscasters" (1977) and Phyllis Kaniss's "Making Local News" (1991). These are not formal research studies or memoirs, but rather reflections on the influence of financial considerations on news quality based primarily on anecdotes from the respective authors' professional experience. For this reason, McManus' study is landmark for its time.

Following the publication of the McManus book, the phrase "market-driven journalism" came into somewhat more common use among scholars.[1] The related concern of the power of certain research tools or indices to "predict" reader preferences and concerns -- the journalistic perspective -- is an area of concern that evolved as researchers investigated certain aspects of the McManus model. Predictive tools were subsequently tested by Curtin (1996).

It was noted earlier that much of the research immediately following the publication of McManus' book concentrated on an economic perspective, particularly that of Curtin (1996) and Demers (1996a, 1996b, 1998a, 1998b). Until recently, there has been relatively little research on the interaction between market-driven journalism and the area of ethics, including newsroom and editorial diversity.

This literature review concentrates on economic trends in the newspaper industry, marketplace and journalism factors affecting editorial content, external pressures on the newspaper industry, and the literature on journalism job roles and satisfaction. What studies do exist on the effect of market-driven principles on

[1] The author mentions the use of market-driven journalism as being in "somewhat" more common use among researchers because a search of the literature reveals only 17 publications through 2003 associated directly with the term.

journalism, its interrelationship with diversity and these issues as they affect smaller newspapers are then examined.

While diversity has long been assumed to be a desirable goal, both for economic and social policy reasons, there has been little research evidence to support the incorporation of market-driven principles into the journalism environment as being beneficial for the expansion of broader demographic representation in either the newsroom or the content of the individual news outlet.

It is important to note that, while the principle of market-driven journalism is often discussed in terms of print journalism as it is in the present study, its principles as first enumerated by McManus emerged exclusively from the study of local broadcast television stations. A former colleague of McManus says this limitation gives McManus' work foregone conclusions that are "…like shooting fish in a barrel" (Lee, Santa Clara Interview, 2003) because it is widely accepted that, as McManus argues, local television news places more emphasis on profit making than does local newspaper journalism (McManus, 1994, pp. 6-7).

Perhaps more important, McManus presents a model cloaked in a phrase that seems inherently sinister.

Finally, McManus' own interpretation of market-driven journalism and the model derived from it gives too little weight to the media consumer.

These and other limitations of the McManus model are discussed more fully later in this chapter.

The author chose to concentrate this study on market-driven journalism in the local newspaper environment to broaden the media platforms in which these

questions are investigated and to expand on his initial investigation into these questions in the large, urban newspaper environment.

Market-Driven Journalism and the Newspaper Industry

The earliest research studies into the effect of the then-unnamed phenomenon of market-driven journalism were grouped together in what has come to be termed the Financial Commitment Model. These early studies suggested that economic competition had relatively little impact on newspaper content (McCombs, 1988).

These early studies have been criticized as has been McManus' work. Lacy (1992) points out that much of the early research into the effect of financial considerations and competition on newspaper content suffered from several limitations, including too-small samples, limited measures of what constituted competition and measures for the dependent variables that were inappropriate for the purpose.

Litman and Bridges (1986) proposed an early model of the effect of market-driven principles that sought to overcome these perceived shortcomings. The model was termed the "Financial Commitment" model because it proposed that only increased budgets, not reallocation of existing budgets, could result in improved newspaper journalism.

The Financial Commitment model was subsequently embraced by Lacy (1992) and expanded in a way that included broadcast as well as print journalism.

Lacy's update of Litman and Bridges' theory yielded a model that consisted of a four-step process:

- Step One: Intensity of competition leads to an increase in the amount of money committed to news content.
- Step Two: As financial commitment to news increases, the quality of news content as it is defined by journalists *increases* (emphasis mine).
- Step Three: As the quality of the news content increases, the audience gains increased utility from the news product.
- Step Four: As audience utility increases, the news organization's (either print or broadcast) market performance improves, as defined by circulation and/or ratings.

Competition has often been viewed as one means of encouraging improvement in the nature and content of the news product. In an early case study, McCombs (1988) found that *The Montreal Gazette* had devoted a greater proportion of its newshole to local stories during competition than after its competing newspaper went out of business. Everett and Everett (1989) found that readers in markets with two or more separately owned and operated newspapers received "better" newspapers, although Lacy (1992) points out that the Everetts' methods of determining "better" were questionable and the measured effect limited.

One of the limitations of these early studies is that they are case studies, the measures of which are called into question and the results of which can never

easily be generalized. They can be criticized as being anecdotal and limited in scope.

Proceeding from these early studies, researchers began in the 1980s to examine the soon-to-be-named phenomenon of market-driven journalism from a more quantified and more journalism-oriented perspective. Also, while more popular works such as McManus' were based in journalism environments other than the newspaper, researchers sought to examine the concept of market-driven journalism in the print newsroom using quantitative methods.

For example, the frequent complaint among journalism professionals regarding contemporary journalism's lack of proper sourcing has been studied and related to economic issues. Fico (1986) observed that increases in the workload of newspaper reporters, measured as number of stories a reporter was assigned to write, results in a decrease in the number of sources consulted by the reporter for each story. This is early evidence of the relationship between the commitment of resources and resulting quality of reportage, with quality in this instance being defined by the number of sources consulted for each story.

Lacy notes significant gaps in research into components of the Financial Commitment model, notably correlation 1) between the quality of content and the audience's utility for direct competition (integral to Step 3 in the model above), and 2) between the audience's utility for the media product and measurable market performance (Step 4 in the model above). These investigators provide some evidence that shifting resources away from the newsroom, editorial staff

cutbacks and other measures deemed advantageous to a newspaper as a business may negatively affect the quality of its journalism.

These forces may not affect all papers in the same way. A large, urban newspaper may have more pronounced effects than may a small, community newspaper. Of course, the reverse may be the case. Hence, it becomes important to consider the specific type of newspaper being studied when seeking to determine effects.

Rosse's model (1975) was proposed earlier than the formal Financial Commitment model, and offered more finely discriminated concepts in a study of intercity newspaper competition. These may be of more use to present researchers.

Owens (1975) dubbed Rosse's work The Umbrella Model. Rosse's model hypothesized four layers of newspapers:

layer one: metropolitan dailies that published substantial amounts of regional and national news;

layer two: satellite daily newspapers similar to the modern targeted editions that are more local in terms of news content than are metropolitan dailies;

layer three: suburban dailies that are almost wholly local in nature;

layer four: non-daily newspapers such as weeklies and shoppers that are specialized and locally oriented.

The Financial Commitment model received some support for its initial two steps: competition leads to increased allocation of resources and increased resources improve the journalism product. It has received less initial support for

its latter two steps: audience utility is enhanced as the news product's quality improves and the newspapers's economic performance improves as a result of the paper's increased audience utility. Further, the Financial Commitment model as a whole has stimulated virtually no research into its appropriateness for intermedia competition.

When this strand of research was initially undertaken, the phenomenon of media consolidation was not yet underway on today's scale. The effect of consolidation on the validity of the Financial Commitment model is an area in need of serious scholarly investigation.

Despite limited support, Lacy (1992) concludes that sufficient evidence of the validity of the Financial Commitment model exists as to make it an appropriate vehicle for use in the consideration of government policies aimed at promoting media competition. Lacy also encouraged research into the relationship between research in uses and gratifications research and economic research (1992), suggesting these would complement each other in gaining an understanding of how and why people use media.

Lacy was particularly hopeful regarding the work of Olien, Donohue and Tichenor (1982), Donohue, Olien and Tichenor (1985) and Shoemaker and Reese (1991). Given the work that had preceded, it was logical to assume in the early 1990s that media research would move in this direction.

Before McManus, Berkowitz (1993) conducted early research into the relationship between journalism and economics in local television, concluding in a study of the practices of 12 local television journalists that trade-offs exist

between journalistic judgment and economic considerations. Given the pressures of time in the local television broadcast environment and the limited financial commitment sometimes available in local television news markets, particularly smaller markets, Berkowitz and McManus both found that journalism decision-making in the local television environment is often based solely on financial considerations or at least influenced heavily by financial considerations.

In practical terms, this may be expressed in fewer news crews available to cover important local stories, limitation in the number of sources contacted for inclusion in stories, limitation in the geographic area covered, and similar effects that have a potentially negative effect on newsgathering.

Berkowitz's work provides early support for McManus' subsequent contention, but like McManus' is limited in scope to local television news. To generalize these negative effects across media, in which there has been little research, is to accept McManus' unproven contention that local television news is "…the best place to study news" (McManus, 1994, p.9). However, if it is indeed correct that financial pressures exist to a disproportionate degree in the local television news environment, then Lee's observation that McManus' conclusions were akin to "shooting fish in a barrel" gains credence.

Early studies and conceptual models served as a prelude for additional in-depth consideration of the relationship between money, markets and news. However, the questions posed by researchers underwent a shift: from the effect of *additional* financial resources on subsequent content (a journalism perspective) to

the effect of *limited* financial resources for news organizations on market performance (a financial perspective).

There is no obvious explanation for this change other than perhaps the pressure on newspaper executives to generate even higher returns on investment than previously had been experienced.

Setting the Stage for McManus

Former journalist Doug Underwood published the first book-length consideration in 1993 of what would come to be known as market-driven journalism. "When MBAs Ruled the Newsroom" had a somewhat ominous title with an ultimately hopeful premise.

The late 1980s and early 1990s were an economic time comparable with the present. The nation had just recovered economically from the excesses of MBA junk-bond marketers during the 1980s, and was beginning to emerge from a recession of several years' duration. But it now seemed that the phenomenon that had pillaged Wall Street and ravaged the nation's savings and loan institutions had "trickled down" – to use the popular Reaganomics phrase of the time – into the newsroom (Underwood, 1988, 1993).

Underwood details the growth of a news leadership that had come to see newspapering as a business subject to the same economic considerations as any business. Underwood summed up the nature of the new newspaper business in a quote from Chris Anderson, then editor of the *Orange County Register*: "We

aren't a candy bar and we aren't a bar of soap. But, damn, we are a product." (Underwood, 1993, Introduction, p. *xi*).

Underwood traces the origins of market-driven journalism back to the mid-1970s. Professional journalism trade organizations like NAA (Newspaper Association of America), ASNE (American Society of Newspaper Editors) and the Newspaper Advertising Bureau (NAB, not to be confused with the National Association of Broadcasters) began funding research at the time to determine how plummeting newspaper readership rates could be lifted (Underwood, 1993, p. 7).

Perhaps influenced by the weakened economy of the time – 1992 was itself a recession year – Underwood refers to business primacy in the newsroom as an historical phase the influence of which had passed, hence the implication of the title of his book: the time when business concerns ruled newsroom judgments had passed. Underwood saw potential good outcomes for readers from the resulting news business' brush with economics.

Among the earlier works cited by Underwood was a study commissioned by ASNE, "Changing Needs of Changing Readers" (Clark, 1980). This survey of 3,500 members of seven professional news organizations concluded that editors needed to change their papers to reflect the personal concerns and news content preferences of the 1970s "Me Generation."

Underwood cites (1993, p. 7) the Clark study as the genesis for the rethinking of newspaper design that began in the 1970s. This redesign resulted in shorter articles in a well-organized, standardized, graphically pleasing format: "If society was growing more solipsistic and inward looking, then newspapers must

follow, Clark's reasoning went." (Underwood, 1993, p.7). Underwood goes on to describe *USA Today* as the leading example of this trend and "…the quintessential product of modern corporate media engineering." (Underwood, 1993, p. 96)

Still, Underwood's view is ultimately hopeful:

> Newspapers are catering to the marketplace with their greater emphasis on customer-oriented journalism. But they appear to be doing this while trying to preserve the traditional journalistic values of editorial autonomy and community service so prized by news workers. (Underwood and Stamm, 1992, pp. 316-317)

McManus and Economic Rationalism

A more thorough academic consideration of market-driven journalism as an economic phenomenon occurred with the publication of McManus' book "Market-Driven Journalism: Let the Citizen Beware?" in 1994. Employing the same concerns as Underwood, McManus crafted a microeconomic model of news production that drew exclusively upon his own experience in the broadcast industry and data gathered from that segment of the industry (Curtin, 1996).

As the title suggests, McManus casts a wary eye on the possible effects of market considerations on journalism practices and product, using as his guide the findings of the Hutchins Commission (McManus, 1988, p.1). Perhaps reflecting the economic good fortunes of the time McManus, in a counterintuitive manner, does not share the ultimate hope expressed by Underwood.

McManus proposes a microeconomic model of news production in which he states that news production is driven by competition for necessary resources in four distinct markets" (McManus, 1994, p. 27):

market one: investors

market two: advertisers

market three: (news) sources

market four: consumers

The McManus view is structural. According to McManus, investors wield the greatest influence because they are part of the corporate structure. Advertisers, though they have their own corporate structures, also act as the bridge between their client news organizations and consumers. Sources are the raw material for what will become the eventual news product. Consumers are relegated to a position with the least influence because they are not part of the news organization's structure and are not the source of its most important revenue stream, a position occupied by the advertisers and the organizations they represent.

Advertisers are the producers of the greatest amount of revenue. They also can act as a moderating influence on newsroom judgments because they can pressure media to act in a manner that does not raise the ire of sponsors with unflattering editorial content.

News sources depend on the media to make their information available to the public. Sources presumably gain some personal or professional satisfaction, while news producers rely on sources for leads, information and credibility. It

could be argued that this directly reciprocal relationship between news sources and producers has become somewhat more tenuous during the last decade. Much of the criticism of news product has focused on the lack of sourcing for news by media as well as on the extensive use of anonymous sources.

Consumers, the final competitive market identified by McManus, trade their attention (and in the case of advertisers, their action) for the information reported by the media.

Beyond these marketplaces, news producers also operate within an organizational culture – a structure – that is governed by two norms: journalism (editorial) and business (marketplace). The journalism norm adjudges news content based on consumers' need to know and the news organization's dispassionate reporting or "objectivity," without consideration for the expenditures in labor or capital needed to achieve journalism goals. The business norm in news production asserts that news departments compete to obtain "…the least expensive mix of content that protects the interests of sponsors and investors while garnering the largest audience advertisers will pay to reach" (McManus, 1994, p. 85).

McManus claims that the journalism and business norms, frequently referred to as church and state, do not operate in a mutually exclusive manner. However, when the two norms do collide, their relative influence is weighted in favor of business norms, particularly when "… investor direction is for maximum profit" (1994, p. 27). Put another way, "…market norms will dominate journalism norms where the two conflict" (McManus, 1994, pp. 21-22).

McManus describes news in his 1994 book as "an elaborate compromise" between the two ideals governing news production and among the four markets working to craft the news product (McManus, 1994, p. 37). By 1995, however, McManus amended his view of news as being a "compromise" to asserting that economic rationalism is replacing social responsibility as the reasoning that underlies media routines (1995). He is ultimately absent hope that social responsibility can win out:

> Efforts to curb junk journalism through an emphasis on professionalization both in journalism training and in organizations of reporters and editors should continue, but they would need to wield economic clout, perhaps through unionization, before management is likely to respond. Appeals to the social responsibility of media owners seem unlikely to succeed so long as those owners are distant stockholders who believe they are insulated from the civic consequences of poor quality news. (McManus, 1994, p.211).

Testing the McManus Model

There are few empirical tests of McManus' microeconomic model of news. One survey of editorial employees at 12 West Coast newspapers, which predates McManus, concluded that staff members at chain-owned newspapers believed their newspapers stressed economic considerations, while staff at family-owned newspapers believed they operated in a climate of editorial autonomy (Underwood & Stamm, 1992). Staff members at each of the newspapers believed by a slight majority that the quality of their newspaper was better when business considerations were given greater emphasis. The authors conclude that:

> Newspapers are catering to the marketplace with their greater emphasis on customer-oriented journalism. But they appear to be doing this while trying to preserve the traditional journalistic values of editorial autonomy and community service so prized by news workers (Underwood & Stamm, 1992, p. 317).

Coulson (1994) reported that 47 percent of the respondents did not accept the belief that profit concerns were being placed before quality concerns at *their* newspaper. Another 39 percent accepted this belief, while 14 percent indicated uncertainty. Such results strongly suggest that what has come to be termed "market-drive journalism" has long been a highly divisive issue among professionals.

As this divisive issue has attracted more research, it has resulted in more finely honed questions. Beam (1996) found that a marketplace orientation is best predicted by the newspapers' own uncertainty over how best to serve readers, not by factors such as competition and ownership. Newspaper management is increasingly predisposed to consider the results of market research (as distinguished from marketplace principles), instead of a monolithic version of professional news judgment, to determine the goodness of fit between a particular kind of editorial content and the community in which the newspaper operates. This confers the benefit of flexibility onto modern newspaper management. As changes in the newspaper's external environment occur, Beam infers, management can shift from a reliance on pure journalism norms to a market research interpretation of the fit between content and community.

Beam found in a 1998 follow-up study that the strength of the marketplace orientation at a particular newspaper does not affect the attention given to issues

pertinent to the community. In fact, in seven instances in which a "significant" difference was found, Beam found that papers with a stronger marketplace orientation were more dedicated to the traditional coverage championed by adherents to the journalism norm. These newspapers were even more likely to take an adversarial stance in their reportage and also professed a strong commitment to journalistic excellence.

Such newspapers were larger in circulation, situated in or near large population centers, and owned by (larger) chains. Beam's 1996 findings are consistent with the work of other researchers, notably Demers (1996b, 1998).

The issues considered by the McManus model have become the salient issues in recent journalism research (Curtin 1996). The model itself, however, has had few empirical tests and none has fully validated his concern that profits were becoming more important than product.

As changes in the newspaper's economic environment occur, manager's seeking to determine what benefits readers may decide to shift from a reliance on professional news judgment to one based on market research. This is precisely the concern of journalists.

Coulson (1995) found in a survey of reporters and editors that 47 percent thought profit concerns were placed ahead of journalism quality concerns at their papers, 39 percent believed journalism norms were considered more important and 14 percent gave a neutral response.

Recalling McManus' work in the broadcast industry, Allen (1995) found that news directors at local television stations "emulate the thinking of their general managers"

(p. 112), while Berkowitz (1993) asserted that there is a "business-journalism dialectic" (p. 67) separating those who aspire to manage the news from those who gather and prepare it.

Beam (1998) found in the follow-up study to his earlier work that the relative strength of the market orientation at a paper does not usually affect the attention given to issues. In fact, his results were counterintuitive.

Among those whose research focuses on large newspapers and use national samples, Demers has also taken a more structural and organizational approach to newspaper economics. He observes (1998) that the more a newspaper exhibits characteristics associated with a vertical corporate organizational structure, the more the management will maximize profit potential, even though managers may place less emphasis on profits as an organizational goal. Without determining why it is the case, Demers' subsequent body of mostly quantitative work (1995, 1996a, 1996b, 1998b) tends to support the notion that larger corporate papers tend to exercise more autonomy and consequent editorial vigor than do smaller or family-run enterprises.

Some literature suggests that ownership structure and variables are not strong predictors of a market-driven orientation. However, Curtin found that internal uncertainty over readership preferences and steady sources of advertising revenues are strong predictors (Curtin, 1996). Curtin employed in-depth

interviews with newspaper managing editors and a discriminant analysis model that correctly identified 76 percent of independently owned newspapers and 65 percent of chain-owned papers.

The use of readership research, carrying stories that might offend advertisers, publishing as editorial copy materials from the marketing department, and the use of public information all failed to contribute significantly to the model's predictive power. Curtin (1996) concludes there is insufficient support for the McManus model, at least as applied to newspapers.

This either calls into question the McManus model altogether or suggests that McManus' view of market-driven journalism is fraught with limitations rooted in its consideration of only the local television broadcast environment.

If work such as that of Demers and Curtin is national and quantitative, relying on data gathered for the most part from large metropolitan newspapers large enough to cultivate a corporate structure, small newspapers have been relatively neglected. There is the work of Picard (1998) and Smith (1995, 1999), both of whom have conducted research into the economics of advertising at small, non-daily newspapers. The author seeks to address in part this neglected area of research in the present study.

Limitations of the McManus Model

While the McManus term may have gained popular acceptance, its meaning as explicated by McManus is less clear. As the author noted in the

previous chapter, the meaning of terms is important. Let us examine the concept behind McManus' term.

McManus' use of the term has several problems:

1) It is inherently sinister;

2) It is undefined;

3) Its application is limited to only local television markets;

4) It excludes the audience from any consideration of what constitutes the market.

Let us consider each of these limitations and what they mean for the present study.

1) McManus' use of the term market-driven journalism is inherently sinister

We live in a nation based on a premise of free markets, willing sellers engaged in economic exchange with willing buyers. If McManus accepted this principle, he may well have termed his model "free market-driven journalism." This term might adequately explain the relationship between what readers (buyers) want and what newspapers (sellers) offer. However, for most readers, the insertion of the word "free" might confer too positive a status on McManus' term.

That is not his goal. In fact, the term market-driven journalism as used by McManus is inherently pejorative and even sinister, as suggested by the subtitle of the book that emerged from his dissertation ("Let the Citizen Beware?")

McManus' view of market-driven journalism is actually Market-driven journalism, as in: The Market, Wall Street, Big-monied interests. Consider this excerpt from the second paragraph of page one of the McManus book:

> As newspapers, television station, even the networks, have been sold by the families of those entrepreneurs to investors on Wall Street, more and more of the nation's news is being produced by corporations whose stockholders seek to maximize return on their investment. Newsrooms have begun to reflect the direction of managers with MBAs rather than green eyeshades. The reader or viewer is now a "customer." The news is a "product." The circulation or signal area is now a "market." (McManus, 1994, p. 1).

All things are of their time. The work from which McManus' phrase springs was completed in 1988. These were the Reagan years, a time of unprecedented growth in the stock market, and of heightened concern about media consolidation and the perceived primacy of business over the public good. It is understandable that this is how McManus frames his discussion, but it is not as illuminating when discussing market-driven journalism in the present.

2) McManus does not operationally define market-driven journalism

McManus never provides readers or subsequent researchers with his operational definition of market-driven journalism in either his book (1994) nor in the dissertation from which his book originates (1988).

Rather, he is content to rely on a comment drawn from the 1947 Hutchins Commission report as the frontispiece for his inquiry:

> The press…is caught between its desire to please and extend its audience and its desire to give a picture of events and people as they really are (Hutchins Commission, 1947 in McManus, 1988, p. 1)

This creates confusion on a very elementary level when discussing market-driven journalism. One reader of an earlier draft of this study commented: "I thought I knew what market-driven journalism is." Another spoke of it in terms of free market capitalism [The Market] and yet another in terms of the audience [the marketplace]. Such imprecision serves only to obscure what is meant by market-driven journalism and prevents a common understanding of the term among readers or researchers.

Still, the term market-driven journalism remains useful in the present discussion because it is a widely accepted reference to the influence of financial considerations [the business norm] in the practice of journalism [the public norm].

For this reason, as a point of common reference, the author finds the term useful. However, McManus leaves his term undefined and imprecise. Therefore, part of the author's goal in this study is to seek an understanding of journalists' own understanding of the term's meaning.

For the purposes of this study, the author used the following definition: *Market-driven journalism is the use of financial considerations, including relationships with advertisers, as a primary determinant of news content in a newspaper.*

This definition is explicated in detail in Chapter Three, Methodology.

3) McManus' application of the term is limited to local television broadcast stations

The data on which McManus crafted his study and postulated his model consisted of two sets of local broadcast television data. Set one was early and late night news viewership data gathered in 1988 at 29 small, medium and large local television broadcast stations nationwide. Set two consisted of four case studies consisting of interview data with news directors and station executives from four unidentified local broadcast stations in the western United States.

McManus justified this concentration on local television broadcast stations because he claimed that the local television media segment was:

- The fastest growing news medium
- More popular than network and perhaps printed news
- Credible and fair
- Influential and respected
- Award-winning and unique
- Highly profitable (McManus, 1994, pp. 9-13)

With the maturing of cable in the 1990s as a delivery system and the rapid growth of the Internet as a news source, the author believes each of these justifications, save the last, can be called into question. This further calls into question the McManus model.

4) McManus excludes the audience from the Market

Among his four markets, consumers (the audience members) are accorded the least amount of influence (investors are accorded the most). It is likely that such a view of consumers would be rejected by present-day

marketing experts and researchers, whose news models are more inclusive of the marketplace and its audience members (Beaudoin and Thorson, 2002).

McManus' view of the audience as the pawn of the investor, the advertiser and of those who decide what's news (Gans, 1979) is certainly consistent with the view of media commentators and critics from Lippmann (1922) through Bagdikian (1990), many of whom he quotes liberally throughout his book. The audience is viewed as undereducated consumers whose worldview is crafted for them by sinister forces whose only interest is profit.

While this view may have some credence, it is most certainly dated. Further, it may be limited in application to the local television broadcast environment. The author's own secondary analyses of data gathered by Missouri researchers at the *Los Angeles Times* suggests strongly that contemporary journalists are all too aware of the need to cultivate the interests and needs of their readership if their newspaper is to remain in business. In fact, their view was that higher profits best benefit underserved audience members and coverage areas (Gross, et. al., 2001)

To be contemporary, any discussion of market-driven journalism should take into account the audience. To appropriately account for the audience, diversity is an important and appropriate consideration. For these reasons, the author believes it necessary to consider audience representation and diversity in the present study.

Market-Driven Journalism and Diversity Intersect

Few issues have promoted more discussion in journalism, both rational and more heated, than concern about the profession's attempts to have practitioners who more accurately reflect the background and concerns of their readership, referred to by the author as representative diversity in Chapter One.

Much of the research in diversity, both before and after that of McManus, has also tended to focus research on broadcast television journalism, usually at the local station level. Perhaps this is because viewers see local television journalists, making their racial and ethnic characteristics apparent.

Early research did attempt to explore the issue of diversity in a newspaper environment. Greenberg et.al. conducted one of the first content analyses (1983). It examined the newspaper coverage of Mexican Americans in six southwest and western markets. The authors found that photographic depictions often achieved parity with the population of Mexican Americans in the markets observed, that Mexican Americans were well represented in sports coverage and not disproportionately portrayed in crime.

However, the study also revealed that stories focusing primarily on Hispanic individuals or groups appeared only 10 percent of the time. So, while the quality of the coverage was representative of the market, its quantity was not. Greenberg et. al. observed this disparity but did not seek to explain it.

Entman, in a study (1992) of the news coverage of four television stations in Chicago, found that a phenomenon the author terms "modern white racism" is

present in news coverage. This takes the form of hostility, rejection and denial toward the aspirations and activities of African Americans. The author urges that crime stories in particular need to be given coverage that offers more context and depth. Rodgers and Thorson (2000) lend support to this finding.

Minority media venues are not immune from problems in portraying news of interest to minority communities. Subervi-Velez, et. al. (1994) found in a content analysis of the coverage of health issues by two Spanish-language television networks that more coverage was needed of health issues particularly relevant to the Latino community and awareness raised about Latino health-issue advocacy groups.

Greenberg and Brand (1994) reviewed the state of research on diversity issues and found that new research efforts seemed to be declining at a time when public interest in diversity issues was rising. The authors focused primarily on television coverage because of its potential as a source for minority and majority young people to acquire new social information about minorities.

In an attempt to compile an extensive summary of research conducted to date on news and diversity, the Missouri School of Journalism, in cooperation with The Ford Foundation, published the Guide to Research on Race and News (Missouri School of Journalism/Ford Foundation, 2000).

The Missouri Guide cites a 1996 Associated Press Managing Editors Report that states: "America's newsrooms are two different worlds. The newsroom experiences of white journalists and of minority journalists contrast so sharply that they're nearly mirror images of each other." The Report adds that this

contrast "…is important both for internal newsroom operations and for news overage. Wide gaps between white and minority journalists exist in both areas." (Ibid, Introduction)

There has developed a backlash to the desirability of ethnic diversity. This has found expression in two prominent and recently decided Supreme Court cases: *Grutter v. Bollinger* (539 U.S. 306, 2003) and *Gratz v. Bollinger* (539 U.S. 244, 2003), and several recent popular books on the subject.

In *Grutter v. Bollinger,* the Supreme considered the petition of a white applicant to the University of Michigan Law School who was denied admission. The applicant's college GPA (3.8) and LSAT score (161) placed her well above other applicants who were granted admission to the School. The petitioner alleged that denial of admission was a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment Equal Protection Clause of the U.S. Constitution, Title VI of The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and 42 U.S.C. 1981 since race was used as a "predominant" factor in admissions decisions. This, alleged the petitioner, gave a greater chance of admission to applicants with lesser qualifications from certain minority groups than to equally or more highly qualified applicants from "disfavored racial groups."

Attorneys for Lee Bollinger, then-president of the University of Michigan, and for the Law School acknowledged that race was one of many "soft variables" used by the School in admissions decisions. This was part of the School's effort to comply with *Regents of Univ. of Cal v. Bakke* (438 U.S. 265).

Bakke was the landmark 1978 decision case that reviewed a medical school admissions program that had set aside 16 of 100 spaces for members of certain minority groups. The stated purpose of the set aside was to achieve diversity in the student body.

In a 5-4 decision with six separate opinions issued, the Court held narrowly for the University because, in the opinion of Justice Powell, attaining a diverse student body was the only interest of the University that survived scrutiny. Such a program was deemed not to violate the Fourteenth Amendment Equal Protection Clause.

In *Grutter v. Bollinger,* the District Court held for the plaintiff, finding the School's use of race as an admissions consideration "unlawful." This was reversed by The Sixth Circuit, which held that Justice Powell's opinion in *Bakke* applied. In another 5-4 decision, The Supreme Court held for the University, citing *Bakke* in an opinion authored and delivered by the decisive voter, Justice O'Connor.

Gratz v. Bollinger (539 U.S. 244, 2003) considered a similar case and the Court's decision was delivered at the same time. Two white Michigan residents, Gratz and Hamacher, were denied admission to the undergraduate College of the University of Michigan. They filed a complaint, citing the same legal authority as the petitioner in *Gratz v. Bollinger*.

A significant difference in this case, however, was that the University's practice was to automatically award 20 of the 100 points needed for

undergraduate admission to members of historically underrepresented racial or minority groups.

The University again cited *Bakke* in its response.

The case followed the same path through the lower courts. In another 5-4 decision, The Supreme Court held for the petitioners in this case.

The difference in this case, cited by Chief Justice Rehnquist in an opinion he delivered, was the assigning of admissions points to any member of a minority group. Thus, the policy was not intended for the narrow purpose of enhancing the diversity of the student body. It had the broad effect of granting an unlawful advantage to certain applicants in the opinion of the Court. As such, the policy did violate the Equal Protection Clause and *Bakke* did not apply as a response in this case.

Justice O'Connor sided with the majority in this opinion, noting in her concurring opinion that the University's undergraduate admissions policy did not provide for a "meaningful individualized review of applicants" whereas the Law School's policy in *Grutter v. Bollinger* did make such provisions (O'Connor, 539 U.S. 306, 2003, concurring).

The author believes these decisions may have significant effects on the crafting of diversity programs in journalism as well as in other areas of American life. The author will discuss the implications for diversity of these two cases in the final chapter of this study.

In "Diversity: the Invention of a Concept," Wood cites a broad array of material from colonial and literary sources to recent studies in support of the

assertion that diversity as presently conceived is a departure from the original meaning and intent of the concept and can have negative consequences. It should be noted here that this view differs from the author's view as stated in Chapter One. Where the author sees diversity as a concept which has evolved, Wood views the current practice of diversity as standing in opposition to its original intent.

McGowan in "Coloring the News" (2003) asserts that journalists have "gotten stories wrong" in recent years "…because of their liberal ideologies and fear of offending African-Americans, gays or feminists."

These recent works are intended for a more popular than scholarly audience. As such, they rely more on anecdote than careful scholarly research, but their recent proliferation is worthy of note since they lend support to a revisionist view of what constitutes diversity.

While these books assert that diversity is bad *per se* for society and journalism respectively, former CBS News television correspondent Bernard Goldberg (2001) addresses the interrelationship between money and the news and entertainment choices of network executives in a recent best-selling work, "Bias: A CBS Insider Exposes How the Media Distort the News." Goldberg uses anecdotal material and Nielsen data to bolster his contention that race is not the seminal issue in television news and entertainment decision making. Money is the determining factor.

While these are popular books, not scholarly studies, it should be remembered that both the Underwood and, to a lesser extent, the McManus books

were also written by former journalists. The concepts about which they write led quickly to serious scholarly research. Presumably, popular works about diversity may lead to a resurgence of serious research on the subject.

That serious research, aside from the works cited previously has been limited largely to the judicial branch. Justice Powell's opinion of the (Supreme) court in *Bakke v. Regents of the University of California* (438 U.S 265, 1978) provided the legal context of discussions about diversity for the past 25 years. The much anticipated opinions and dissents in *Grutter v. Bollinger* and *Gratz v. Bollinger* (2003) noted earlier (pp. 52-54), are likely to inform debate and research on the question of diversity and the crafting of programs designed to enhance diversity for the foreseeable future.

However, even Justice O'Connor, who wrote the Opinion of the Court supporting narrow racial preference schemes in *Grutter v. Bollinger*, issued a challenge and a caution to those relying on the continuation of the legality of diversity efforts, writing: "We expect that 25 years from now, the use of racial preferences will no longer be necessary to further the interest approved today." (O'Connor, *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S., 306, 2003, concurring).

While there is a growing body of research on both market-driven journalism and diversity issues in journalism, there has been little research conducted on the relationship between the two.

In 1998, the Missouri School of Journalism contracted with the Ford Foundation and the *Los Angeles Times* to study various aspects of that

newspaper's publicly announced program to enhance diversity in its newsroom and, by extension, in its coverage.

In one of the first published studies using secondary analysis of data from this work, Gross, Curtin and Cameron (2001) identified a widespread belief among *Times'* journalists that management's diversity program had as part of its rationale a corporate concern for profit at the *Los Angeles Times.* The Southern California audience coverage area of the *Times* possesses a large Hispanic population. Hispanics also constitute the fastest-growing minority population in the nation and are a highly prized potential consumer market.

The economic incentive notwithstanding, the researchers found no obvious evidence for concern among journalists who staff that newspaper that profit was becoming more important than product among the management personnel of the paper. They also concluded that diversity was being enhanced for both journalistic and economic reasons.

The authors conclude:

> (journalist) respondents believed that their paper should be more responsive to present and prospective readers. In this sense, they embraced the use of the term 'market-driven journalism' and believe it reflects a commitment to serve the changing and diverse community of readers in their market area.
>
> What emerges from the data, then, may be the recognition that in today's marketplace, one increasingly competitive for audience attention, both traditional journalistic norms and business norms form a necessary baseline (Gross, et. al., p. 22).
>
> …all of the journalists who commented on the journalistic versus market-driven concerns of their publisher's goal of enhancing diversity in coverage and representation at the newspaper agreed that *both motives* were in effect and that diversity would encourage circulation growth and financial health of the newspaper (Gross, et. al. p. 23)

This analysis of in-depth interviews with 76 *Los Angeles Times* editorial staff members suggests journalists' acceptance of the twin motivations of better journalism and an improved bottom line may be related to concepts known in public relations research as "hedging" and "wedging." (Stamm and Bowes, 1972) In this example, journalists *hedge* when they show a willingness to embrace both motives, at least in part. They *wedge* when they choose one motivation and eschew the other. Journalists who *wedge* would view good journalism and good business as mutually exclusive.

The awareness among readership about the motivations of the *Times* in pursuing diversity is an interesting question both because of the sparse number of active programs, hence little information about public perception of them, and public reception to them. Previous research has offered findings that argue for intensive research into questions of newsroom diversity and the public perception of that characteristic.

Gross, Curtin and Cameron (2001) found that editorial staffers at the *Los Angeles Times* believed there was little discernible influence on the journalism of the newspaper by its then-new publisher's concern for improving the paper's bottom-line by enhancing its newsroom and editorial content diversity to more accurately reflect the changing nature of greater Los Angeles. Indeed, the journalists seemed to believe there was much to be gained in terms of making the newspaper more representative of its audience and a more successful business enterprise:

> Numbers attract advertisers. The city has seen a dramatic change in the major advertisers. We have lost department stores. We have

> lost all those big, full-page ads that made us a fat, rich newspaper. We have to fight for those ads now that used to just float in before. To do that, we have to have numbers. We have to have the demographics (Gross, et. al., 2001, p. 22).

This, it should be emphasized, is the view of a journalist, one of several reflecting a similar point of view. This is not to suggest, however, that journalists are unaware of the possible "unequal" influence on the news product that could be asserted by concern for investors or advertisers, as stated by McManus:

> If you start monkeying with the content, that's where most of us are having a problem. So I don't have a problem with research or that sort of thing to find out how we can do what we do better. It's when you start skewing the product and changing content…
>
> (but) I've never had that happen. I've never been told "write this story differently" [because of marketplace concerns]…and I don't know anyone who has [been told to do that] (ibid.).

Perhaps the notion of a news "marketplace" is sparking other innovative approaches to research in news that seek to explore the intersection of market-oriented journalism and diversity.

Beaudoin and Thorson (2002) have offered a theory of news that conceives of news coverage as a product, a commodity, to which users choose and respond in much the same manner as they do other commodities. The researchers contend that "…as the mass media continue to proliferate and diversify, they become more product like" (p. 243). They applied their model specifically to respondents' evaluation of minority and ethnic coverage, but offered the belief that the model could be extended to considerations of general news coverage as well (p. 250).

Beaudoin and Thorson "…articulate four determinants of attitude toward newspaper which, in turn, influences newspaper readership" (p. 257):

Determinant 1: News credibility, specifically advertising credibility or, citing MacKenzie and Lutz (1989) "the extent to which the consumer believes claims made about the brand in the ad to be truthful and believable" (p. 247);

Determinant 2: Attitude toward the financial aspect of journalism;

Determinant 3: Attitude toward diversity aspects of journalism; and,

Determinant 4: Individual differences.

The authors conclude:

> …it appears that attitudinal antecedents offer a general conception of a media outlet, which then has a direct association with news media use. In other words, a person views a product such as news coverage in terms of the four antecedent characteristics and, with that understanding, moves ahead to form a decision of the overall quality of a branded outlet and its coverage. (p. 258)

Beaudoin and Thorson concede the limitations of their analysis – its restriction to one urban center and correlation analysis which cannot be used to determine causation. Still, the authors express the conviction that their model has important implications for journalists who "…should understand the important role that public perceptions and evaluations of news coverage play in media use decisions." (p. 258)

The Marketplace Theory as proposed by Beaudoin and Thorson is interesting in that the authors attribute importance in the selection and use of media to, in order, consumers, advertisers and sources. This is almost the precise inverse of the McManus model. They do not ascribe a role to investors. In some

respects then, news decision making may be referred to as top-down, the McManus model, or bottom-up, the Beaudoin-Thorson model.

The relationship between market-driven journalism and diversity is an area of importance, both in terms of the historic importance of the newspaper in American society and of its future significance. Awareness of the relationship between economics and audience representation is not limited to scholars, nor is the debate one that is new. Research conducted with the editorial staff of the *Los Angeles Times* (in Gross, et. al., 2001) yielded the following comment:

> The history of journalism is a tension between the idealism of the profession and the people who have worked in it...and the fact that we are a moneymaking operation. That's always driven what the newspaper is. For example, even the whole idea of objectivity was not commonly seen in American journalism at the turn of the century. The idea that a newspaper could be an objective source of information that citizens could rely on was itself a marketing tool used to build up circulation after years of Yellow Journalism and all that. So, I think there's a dialectic going on here. On the one hand, here there's a huge market that the newspaper has a potential (to reach). The newspaper knows that it has to respond to that for its own survival. Miami realized long ago that it was becoming a Cuban town. (We) are realizing that, too. At the same time, there are a lot of people here who realize that it is the right thing to do anyway. That it's more fair, more open…because those are values with which Americans were brought up. That was what makes us a good country, that's why we should be proud to be American. We open our arms to everybody. It is both a moral and an economic issue here (Gross, et. al, p. 25).

Objectives of This Study

Market-driven journalism, diversity and the relationship among them remain strongly divisive issues in certain segments of the journalism profession and in American society as a whole.

Previous research by the author and colleagues (Gross, et. al., 2001 and 2002) has demonstrated that concern for, and knowledge about, both these issues exist among editorial practitioners in one large, urban, highly diverse newspaper environment.

The editorial practitioners at most similar newspapers would, the author contends, show evidence of similar awareness and concern. Editorial scandals at *The New York Times* during the spring and summer of 2003 were reported to have made newsroom's management and the potential effects of a highly proactive stance on diversity the topics of conversation and concern among the paper's editorial staff for several months (Mnookin, 2004).

While the model of The Elite Newspaper (Merrill, 1968) may be the source of most news for the serious newspaper consumer, concern about the effect of economics and diversity reaches throughout the journalism community to small newspapers as well. Indeed, the lack of alternative newspaper sources may be of even greater significance in smaller communities.

As noted by McManus in the conclusions of his book (1994, pp. 202-211), research into the effects of market-driven journalism in the newspaper environment is negligible. This author sought in part to address that lack of

scholarship in two previous studies. However, those were conducted in an environment that is large, urban and diverse.

Drawing on observations and using methods from those studies, the author has explored the phenomenon of market-driven journalism and demographic representations as they are understood and practiced at small newspapers to address the following questions:

- How widespread is the knowledge of what constitutes "market-driven journalism" among journalism practitioners in small newspaper newsrooms and how do they interpret the concept?
- To what extent do financial considerations guide their newspapers' coverage of their communities and are the editorial employees aware of these considerations?
- Do editorial staff members feel their newspapers are representative of the audience in the communities they cover?
- How well does the actual content of the newspapers reflect the composition and concerns of the respective communities?
- What consequences might the author's findings have for the practice of journalism?

In order to address these issues, the author visited community newspapers throughout the state of Missouri, interviewed editorial employees as well as individuals in the community newspaper environment who wear more than one hat, conducted content analyses of the newspapers and compared these findings

with the most recent census data available (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000, available 2002).

The remaining chapters of this study are devoted to that research and the observations gleaned from it.

Chapter Three

Determining What Drives Journalism: A Qualitative Method

The Problem

Market-driven journalism is a term that has come into general use, but has yet to have a commonly agreed upon definition. Further, the phenomenon has not been studied in all media.

Market-driven journalism as first explicated by McManus was limited in its scope of application to the local broadcast television medium. Beam (1998) has considered the phenomenon as it is reflected in the content of daily newspapers. Cohen (2002) has examined online journalism as a technological manifestation of market-driven journalism. Zaller (2003) even has examined the political consequences of market-driven journalism.

To date, however, market-driven journalism in the community newspaper environment has been ignored as a subject of research. The present study seeks to address that dearth of research by examining how community newspaper journalists interpret the phenomenon of market-driven journalism and its effect on the content of their newspapers as it reflects [or fails to reflect] the diversity of their audience.

Diversity is only one characteristic that could be of interest in a study such as the present one. However, it is an important component of this study for the following reasons:

- At the time data were being gathered for this study, a number of initiatives were underway to increase ethnic and cultural diversity in journalism, notably ASNE 2000;
- Diversity may be understood differently among editors and journalists at community newspapers than among their editorial counterparts at large newspapers [the venue for the author's previous work in this area];
- Audience diversity is an inherently important component of the marketplace within which all media, including community newspapers, must operate;
- Potentially significant changes in the composition of the audience were occurring in the communities and among the audience members of participating newspapers while data were being gathered for this study.

An Operational Definition

Researchers interpret the term market-driven journalism differently as was demonstrated in the literature review. Early research (Rosse, 1975; Litman and Bridges, 1986; Fico, 1986; McCombs, 1988; Everett and Everett, 1989; and Lacy, 1992) examined market influences on journalism in terms of the quality of newspapers as reflected in the amount of financial commitment to the editorial staff.

Research by former professional journalists like McManus (1988, 1994) and his contemporaries (Underwood, 1993; Berkowitz, 1993) used case studies of local broadcast television as a vehicle to assert that a phenomenon they termed market-driven journalism was eroding the quality of journalism and

subordinating it to the demands of investors and advertisers. Quantitative researchers (Demers 1993, 1995, 1996a, 1996b, 1998a, 1998b) dispute this contention or at least call it into doubt (Curtin, 1996, 1998).

More recent research into the phenomenon is varied. Some researchers (Beaudoin and Thorson, 2002) emphasize the importance of the audience and of the marketplace on journalism content. Others (Cohen, 2002) suggest that new technologies make journalism more prone to market considerations. Still other research returns examination of market-driven journalism to its roots and broad themes; specifically, the effect of the phenomenon upon civic life and democracy itself (Zaller, 2003).

The author appreciates the value of studying a problem from varied perspectives, but believes that this can confuse the issue. Therefore, the author approached the interpretation of the results of this study with the following operational definition of market-driven journalism in mind:

Market-driven journalism is the use of financial considerations, including relationships with advertisers, as a primary determinant of news content in a newspaper.

While this is surely not the only, nor perhaps even the best, definition of the phenomenon of market-driven journalism, the author believes it to be the most useful definition of the term as it applies to the problem considered in this study and in the community newspaper environment.

Journalists Perceptions About the Marketplace Have Changed

Newspaper journalists do perceive financial, demographic and marketing considerations as factors in the definition of their audience. As one editorial respondent asserted to a team of University of Missouri researchers:

> Numbers attract advertisers. Los Angeles has seen a dramatic change in the major advertisers. We have lost supermarkets. We have lost department stores. We have lost all those big, full-page ads that made us a fat, rich newspaper. We have to fight for those ads now that used to just float in before. To do that, we have to have numbers. We have to have the demographics (in Gross, et. al. 2001, p. 22).

In the same study, researchers found evidence that editorial employees do not perceive financial, marketing and demographic concerns as being necessarily in opposition to the pursuit of good journalism:

> If you start monkeying with the content, that's where most of us are having a problem. I've never had that happen. I've never been told 'write this story differently' [because of financial concerns]…and I don't know anyone else here who has (been told to do that) (ibid.).

Members of the *Times* target audience also perceive the paper's concern for aligning its demographic representation and editorial coverage with that of its target audience as being a worthy goal:

The analysis suggests that whereas *Times'* journalists and members of the community sharply differ in how they perceive journalists' motives for covering diverse communities, they agree that efforts to improve minority coverage are positive (Gross, et. al., 2002, p. 274).

If journalists at a large, urban daily newspaper incorporate demographic considerations such as income, ethnicity and gender into the definition of their

audience, do journalists at small community newspapers do likewise? Do the more urban locations and vertical organizational structures of large newspaper organizations promote such considerations? Would the smaller, more rural location, relatively homogenous and more horizontal organizational structure of the community newspaper preclude these considerations?

Put another way, how do journalists at community newspapers interpret market-driven journalism, and does it have an effect on journalism practices at those newspapers? The answer to the first question will provide some insight into the current state of journalism practices at community newspapers. If it can be demonstrated that market-driven motivation and practices are becoming institutionalized among the current generation of young journalists, this study and others like it can help give insight into the future of the journalism enterprise.[2]

Research Questions

The author used several data sets to examine and determine the possible relationship among certain phenomena related to the question of market-driven journalism at small newspapers. The following are the author's interrelated research questions, derived both from both a review of the literature and as a means of addressing the author's objectives in undertaking the study:

[2] The author refers to journalism as an "enterprise" both to reflect its business component as discussed in Chapter One and to acknowledge the difficulty of defining precisely what is journalism and who is a journalist.

- How widespread is the knowledge of what constitutes "market-driven journalism" among journalism practitioners in small newspaper newsrooms and how do they interpret the concept?
- To what extent do financial considerations guide their newspapers' coverage of their communities and to what extent are the editorial employees aware of these considerations?
- Do editorial staff members feel their newspapers are representative of the audience in the communities they cover?
- Do the papers, in fact, reflect that feeling in their content?

Qualitative method by its nature seeks to be interpretive and explanatory, using techniques and data sources tailored specifically to respond to the research questions posed by a particular study (Willey, 1999). These goals are best achieved when multiple sources of data are used to examine related research questions. For this study, three data sources were collected and examined:

1) Interviews were conducted from May through August 2000 with 29 editorial employees – reporters, editors and publishers – on the staff of nine community newspapers throughout the state of Missouri;
2) Inventories of stories were selected for content analysis in accordance with accepted sampling methods (Krippendorf, 1980, 2003) from editions of the newspapers whose staff members participated in the study. This analysis sought to determine the extent to which the respective newspaper's content reflects the interviewees' assessment of how extensively and how well the newspapers covered certain audience demographic communities in their coverage areas; and

3) The U.S. Census Bureau data from the year 2000 census, which became available in full in 2002, were used in this study to determine the actual demographic composition of those communities in the newspapers' coverage area.

Using analyses of the interview data, the author determined the extent of journalists' knowledge of "market-driven journalism" as a concept, and of market forces and their influence on editorial decisions at their newspapers.

This method also provided the author a means to determine diversity, the extent to which the journalists' assessment of the editorial considerations determining newspaper content conforms with each newspaper's actual performance in representing its actual audience(s) as reported in the 2000 census.

By using individual county census data and actual examples of editorial coverage, the author determined the gap between the real audience as measured by the census and the audience as it appears in each newspaper.

The Newspaper Sample

In order to determine what communities, and by extension which newspapers, would provide potentially interesting material for inclusion in this study, the author conducted preliminary interviews with a panel of regional experts on the State of Missouri:

1) Heather Oliver, a Master of Social Work student in the University of Missouri Department of Rural Sociology;

2) James Sterling, Chair in Community Newspaper Management at the Missouri School of Journalism and a publisher with over 30 years of experience in the newspaper industry in the state of Missouri; and,

3) Larry Brown, a cultural geographer and instructor in the Department of Geography at the University of Missouri, and a specialist in rural communities in the Midwest.

In gathering the newspaper sample and choosing individuals for participation in this study, the author's intention was threefold:

1) to identify newspapers whose publishers and editorial staff members would be both cooperative and candid;

2) to identify to the extent possible willing participating newspaper organizations whose communities were undergoing demographic shifts that could be causing the organization's leadership to consider responses to questions of interest to the author in completing this study; and,

3) to obtain a critical mass of interview material. The expert panel above proved quite helpful in achieving the first and second of the author's objectives. Members of the dissertation committee were helpful in determining what would constitute a critical mass of interview material.

Publishers from newspapers statewide were identified and contacted to achieve broad statewide representation, particularly with respect to geographic features. The author gathered a sample of newspapers covering communities, the geographic and cultural features of which result in what might be termed micro-communities. The resulting sample of participating newspapers and

interviewees at those newspapers is therefore a convenience sample, but one the composition of which reflects a broad cross- section of the communities and newspapers of Missouri.

The newspapers and affiliated staff members that participated in this study were:

1) *Aurora Advertiser,* Aurora, MO
2) *Boone County Journal*, Ashland, MO
3) *Central Missouri News*, Sedalia, MO
4) *The Hannibal Courier-Post*, Hannibal, MO
5) *The Lawrence County Record*, Mt. Vernon, MO
6) *The Marshall Democrat-News*, Marshall, MO
7) *The Milan Standard*, Milan, MO
8) *The Monett Times*, Monett, MO
9) *Southeast Missourian*, Cape Girardeau, MO

A total of 34 interviews were conducted, 29 with editorial employees of the nine newspapers. Three additional interviews with the Missouri regional experts noted above were conducted prior to selecting the communities and newspapers. Two brief interviews were conducted following data collection to aid in the analyses: one with *Denver Post* editor Greg Moore and another with media economist Stephen Lee of Santa Clara University.

Ultimately, a total of over 43 hours of interviews were recorded and transcribed. It bears repeating that staff members at the community newspapers where the interviews were conducted did indeed tend to occupy positions with a

broader range of responsibilities than those at large, urban newspapers. There were far fewer employees, and the organizational model was far more horizontal than that of large organizations with more narrowly defined responsibilities.

It was not unusual for the community newspaper employees interviewed to have many editorial and in some instances advertising responsibilities as components of their jobs. This was not true in all cases. One participating newspaper had a total staff of fewer than 10 employees, another a staff in excess of 100 employees. These differences are noted when relevant to the discussion.

The interview subjects self-identified their function. The primary occupational positions occupied by the interview subjects included:

- eight reporters and photojournalists with experience ranging from fewer than 12 months to 12 years in the newspaper industry;
- eight editors with experience ranging from eight to 43 years in the newspaper industry; one editor/publisher with 25 years of journalism experience;
- five publishers and/or owners with experience ranging from 12 years to one individual with 45 years of experience in the newspaper industry; and,
- eight respondents whose positions had both editorial and non-editorial responsibilities. These individuals had self-identified *journalism* experience ranging from zero years (one individual who had 16 years of newspaper experience in a variety of non-editorial positions) to 31 years in a wholly editorial capacity.

In accordance with standard procedures adopted by the University of Missouri's Human Studies Committee, all participation was completely voluntary with participants informed in advance of the purpose of the interviews and given the option to refuse continued participation at any time during the interview. All interviews were completed without incident. No participant chose to withdraw from the study.

The author began with the following standard set of questions approved by dissertation co-chairs: Dean Mills, Dean of the Missouri School of Journalism and Glen Cameron, Maxine Wilson Gregory Chair in Journalism Research at the School. These questions were designed to elicit responses critical to the research questions being explored:

- Have you ever heard the term "market-driven journalism" and, if so, what do you understand the term to mean?
- Whom do you see as the audience for what you write (for reporters/"edit" for editors; "publish" for publishers)?
- Diversity in a newspaper can be defined as the fair representation of the different groups that make up the community in the paper's coverage area.
- Using this definition, how good a job does your newspaper do in representing diversity in its content?
- Do you believe a newspaper can pay equal attention to its community's diversity and to the paper's economic health?

Using these questions as an initial template, the interviewer explored a variety of additional considerations related to the research questions. The points

pursued in the individual interviews depended primarily upon the ability of the respondent to provide information critical to answering the research question. As a result, the length of interviews varied from a low of approximately 45 minutes to a high of more than one and one-half hours.

Beyond the original questions common to all the interviews, the author also explored related questions which could be illuminated by the particular respondent's experience in the industry (or lack thereof), his or her position at the newspaper, the community in which the newspaper was located, the experience of that newspaper in understanding and addressing market-driven influences in newspapers, and the general interest of the respondent in pursuing experiences or anecdotes relevant to the author's inquiry.

The result is a series of interviews all related to the central theme. All were responsive to certain identical questions, but expansive enough to take advantage of the particular experiences and knowledge of the individual respondent and to account for the specific community and culture wherein the newspaper is published.

The author believes that considerations of local community and culture are particularly important in discussions about community newspapers. These newspapers are often the only media resource available for communicating information about local events and issues, culture and history. Multiple voices are rarely available in the small town environment. As a result, a sense of place is quite palpable in community newspapers and an important consideration in discussions about them (Clay, G., 1994; Jackson, J.B., 1994).

Though the newspapers at which interviews were conducted all are from one state, Missouri has several advantages as a venue for this study from the point of view of cultural geography. These advantages are the result of two natural and two man-made geographic features of the state: rivers and roads.

Just as one does not ordinarily associate Yellowstone National Park with the state of Wyoming, so too do most people not immediately associate the state of Missouri with Mark Twain, the person most responsible for constructing in literature the cultural myth of the Mississippi River and embedding that river's influence into American folklore. Nor might most people associate Lewis & Clark with Missouri, but it was from the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri's namesake river that these explorers set out to chart the equally mythological American West during the presidency of Thomas Jefferson.

For a nation whose western boundary is now 7,000 miles west of the Mississippi River in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, it is difficult to recall that the mention of Missouri was once synonymous with The Far West. The Gateway Arch in St. Louis on the banks of the Mississippi signified that here was the place that was indeed the gateway to the Western United States.

St. Louis, a compact urban space graced with the vertical architectural elements of its European immigrants and the power of East Coast financiers, was – is – the last great Eastern city. But 250 miles away, spanning the Missouri River on the state's western border with Kansas, is the horizontal urban/suburban counterpoint of Kansas City, the nation's first great Western city.

Missouri is bisected north and south. It is bisected in part by the Missouri River as it flows east from the Continental Divide to meet the Mississippi, but also by that modern, mid-1950s construct of artificial geography, The Interstate Highway. Cutting almost through the center of the state, Interstate 70 forms a manmade barrier between the cities and towns to its north and south, an unnatural barrier that has in some ways isolated and helped preserve small communities and distinct local cultures.

> Roads no longer merely lead to places; they are places. And, as always, they serve two important roles: as promoters of growth and dispersion, and as magnets around which new kinds of development can cluster. In the modern landscape, no other space has been so versatile (Jackson, 1994, pp. 190-191).

In Northeast Missouri, there is Hannibal, home to Mark Twain…and also of Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer. In Northwest Missouri is St. Joseph, the Westernmost civilized outpost, the 1860s headquarters of The Pony Express. In Southeast Missouri is Cape Girardeau, a place with a river wall on the Mississippi, Cajun restaurants and Zydeco music, a place the very name of which reminds the reader of the dominant local cultures: Louisianan and French. Travel west to Missouri's far border and you arrive at quintessentially mid-American towns: Independence, home of President Harry Truman, and Springfield, home to Presidential Candidate and Truman

Missouri is bisected north and south by Interstate 70. Local geographers sometimes note that the portion of the state North of that thoroughfare has much in common culturally with Iowa, resulting in a distinctly Midwest farming

culture. Travel south of Interstate 70 and one experiences the foothill-and-bass-fishing feel of Arkansas and the Ozarks.

Just as Interstate 70 flows almost parallel to The Missouri River, Interstate 25 follows the Mississippi River along Missouri's eastern state border, connecting the more rural communities in northeast and southeast Missouri, like Hannibal and Cape Girardeau, with the urban hub, St. Louis.

An additional advantage in using Missouri as the research field site for a study such as this one is its geographic location at the near-center of the continental United States. This fact combined with the state's proximity to the north-south and east-west Interstates that pass through both St. Louis and Kansas City give Missouri varied physical and cultural geography, regional typicality and ease of access.

Both St. Louis and Kansas City are routinely used by advertisers as product test markets, and the growth of certain minority populations equals and in some cases exceeds the U.S. average. Missouri is a reflection of the United States as it once was, as it now is and as it is becoming.

The author sought to complete all interviews and gather the editorial content during the same visit whenever possible. Those visits were completed during a three-month period that coincided with the time period during which The Census Bureau was conducting the latest decalogic United States census. This would ensure that all three data sets were gathered from similar time periods and, in the case of the newspaper interview material and newspaper content, could be gathered during the same visit.

This latter point was an important consideration. Missouri is a relatively large state [twelfth largest by area] and the participating newspapers are separated by substantial distances. With limited time and opportunity to visit the respective newspapers, as well as limited funding, efficiency was an important consideration. That efficiency was achieved, with all interviews conducted and data collected during the narrow window chosen for that purpose.

With respect to the data gathered, interviews were selected as the primary source for the following reasons:

1) It was the author's goal to gain a comprehensive understanding of the market-driven phenomenon as a process being experienced at community newspapers, as an event occurring in a particular place, during a particular span of time. Willey notes (pages 67-68) that "…the use of focused, in-depth interviews help to frame the event in a dimension of time and history and to shed light into the cultural context of the journalistic time period."

2) Though not intended to be a study directly comparable with the author's and his co-authors' previous work, the same phenomena, market-driven journalism and its relationship with diversity, were being studied and a similar strategy primarily using interviews proved to be very useful in achieving the aims of those earlier studies: smaller scale studies but ones with similar research questions, field environment (the newsroom) and professional populations.

3) Just as one cannot overly generalize from the results of work at one large newspaper like the *Los Angeles Times* to all large daily newspapers, the author does not propose to generalize results from the sample of journalists and

community newspapers presented here to all journalists at all community newspapers. However, the particular methods used do permit gathering an inventory of themes, from which inferences can be made to be examined in the future by other researchers. At this nascent stage of research into the phenomenon of market-driven journalism at community newspapers and audience representation, inferential research using qualitative methods is a useful tool in defining the issues worthy of continued study in large and small newspapers published in large urban areas as well as smaller communities.

All interviews were audiotaped with the verbal and written permission of the participants. This was done in an unobtrusive manner to ensure factual accuracy due to the volume of original interview material gathered for this study. This also permitted the author to pay careful attention to each subjects, and preserves an archive of original data that can be made available to other researchers.

Analysis of the Interview Data

The author employed the analytic induction strategy described in Wimmer and Dominick and adapted by Stainback and Stainback (Wimmer and Dominick, 1997) to analyze and interpret the interview data gathered from the editorial staff members of the nine newspapers included in the study. The author reviewed the taped interview transcripts and his notes to select themes garnered during the interviews. Interview cases were then examined to determine the viability of the selected themes and their relationship to the research questions.

During the course of the author's research, several events occurred which the author deemed potentially useful in adding perspective to the analysis of data gathered during the initial interview procedure and analysis.

Those events included:

- the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001
- the economic downturn which began with the collapse of the speculative, so-called dot-com industry beginning March 2000 and has continued to the time of this writing. This downturn has been reflected in a vastly reduced expenditure on all advertising, including newspaper advertising.
- Supreme Court decisions in *Grutter v. Bollinger* (539 U.S. 306, 2003) and *Gratz v. Bollinger* (539 U.S. 244, 2003) on June 23, 2003, which may have lasting effects on the crafting of legally acceptable programs promoting diversity in education and employment practices.

Observations concerning the effects of these events appear in the narrative in Chapters Five through Eight as appropriate to the discussion.

Chapter Four

The Show Me State: Its Places and Papers as the Research Laboratory

Missouri: A Microcosm of America[3]

"Missouri is all America in one place," wrote Irving Dilliard, editorial page editor of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (in Pierce & Hagstrom, p. 593):

> In May, Missouri is Virginia and billowing apple orchards pink-white for blossomtime. In late June, it is the beginning of the Great Plains and waving, golden-ripe wheat of Kansas, Nebraska and Dakotas. In August, Missouri is Illinois' blazing cornland prairie. It is rocky New England farmlands, bright with larkspur and hollyhocks along rail fences. It is sun-baked mine fields of Oklahoma, New Mexico and Arizona. It is broad patches of cotton and beet pickers with their bulging bags from Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana. (ibid.)

Missouri may be America's most representative state at least in part because of its geography. Missouri is home to vastly diverse regions. Eight states border Missouri, and those states represent highly varied ecologies and cultures: Nebraska and Tennessee, Kansas and Kentucky, Illinois and Oklahoma, Iowa and Arkansas. Placed in the midst of such an array of diverse geography and geology, Missouri was perhaps fated to be an American potpourri.

There are its two great cities. St. Louis is the last great city of the East, old-moneyed, cultured and vertical. At the western end of Missouri's

[3] The author is indebted to two works for much of the information on the geography and history of Missouri included in this Chapter. Those works are: *The Book of America* by Neil R. Peirce and Jerry Hagstrom, and *The State of Missouri: An Autobiography* by Walter Williams. The former is an overview of the State of Missouri, including its physical characteristics. The latter was written to commemorate the 1904 Louisiana Centennial Exposition in St. Louis and includes a detailed history and economic profile of each Missouri county.

longitudinal extreme defined by Interstate 70 is Kansas City, the first great metropolis of the West, entrepreneurial, sprawling and horizontal.

Together, St. Louis and Kansas serve as modern-day expressions of virtually all American urban problems and possibilities.

With its central location and cities that define America's poles, Missouri is, in the words of William Seward, secretary of state to presidents Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Johnson, "the middle man, the mediator, the common center between the Pacific and the Atlantic." (ibid.)

There are the two man-made swatches of concrete – Interstate 70 and Interstate 25 – that cast Missouri's centrality literally in stone and give the state commercial access to all points north and south, east and west.

And to this central-sited body, one must add two great arteries, Missouri's and America's two great rivers. From the north and west comes the muddy Missouri, which provided both an obstacle and pathway to Lewis and Clark in their discovery of one thousand new miles of America. Big Muddy winds toward The Mighty Mississippi, known to Native Americans as "The Father of Waters," which originates in the north and ends in The Gulf of Mexico. Together, these great rivers provide nearly 2,000 miles of navigable waterways and access to America's vast heartland of cattle, hogs and grain.

Missouri itself comprises nearly one-third rich farmland similar to that of its northern neighbor, Iowa (Peirce & Hagstrom, pp. 594-597). Because it is ideal for many field crops, cattle and hog feedlots, many of the state's original migrants came upriver from the Deep South and settled in the counties between

the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. This region in central and northeastern Missouri is an area that came to be known as "Little Dixie." The migrants brought with them a talent for agriculture and a penchant for slaveholding, accounting in part for Missouri's bifurcated political heritage, with supporters of both the Union and the Confederacy during the Civil War that persists to this day.

North and northwest of Little Dixie are less agriculturally productive counties settled by migrants predominantly from Ohio and Iowa.

Further south is the picturesque, formerly remote region of high hills and natural springs know as the Ozark Mountains, somewhat misnamed since its highest point of elevation is below 1,800 feet. Settled by backwoodsmen from Kentucky, West Virginia and Eastern Tennessee, these "hillbillies" developed a culture rich in mountain lore and music, and surprisingly rich in tolerance as well. Settlers from the Ozarks did not embrace the slaveholding ways of Little Dixie, and supported the Union during the Civil War.

Still relatively remote, the Ozarks remain impoverished in comparison to the surrounding counties and states. In recent years, however, tourism has provided much-needed revenue. Natural springs and man-made lakes now provide regional getaways for vacationers from Chicago to New Orleans.

Finally, there are the seven counties that make up Missouri's "boot heel," a southeastern extremity that cuts a notch into Arkansas and Tennessee. Here, the Deep South feeling is palpable. Cotton fields were transplanted here

from nearby Southern states whose fields were destroyed with the 1920s invasion of the boll weevil.

Missouri and the roots of its residents are so varied as to have given rise to a spirit of Yankee practicality together with Southern backwoods skepticism. Or, in the words of 19th century Missouri Congressman William Vandiver that gave life to the State's famous motto: "Frothy eloquence neither convinces nor satisfies me. I am from Missouri. You have got to show me." (Peirce & Hagstrom, p. 594)

Missouri: A Microcosm of American Journalism

> "I *have* had a call to literature, of a low order – that is, humor. It is nothing to be proud of, but it is my strongest suit…seriously scribbling to excite the *laughter* of God's creatures."
>
> Samuel Clemens, alias 'Mark Twain'
> Letter to his brother, Orion and wife Mary Clemens,
> October 19, 1865

> "For a true writer each book should be a new beginning where he tries again for something that is beyond attainment. He should always try for something that has never been done or that others have tried and failed. Then sometimes, with great luck, he will succeed."
>
> Ernest Hemingway
> Nobel Prize acceptance speech, 1954

As Missouri is diverse in its geography and culture, its politics and population, so too is it diverse in its journalism history, which ranges from the wit and humor of Mark Twain to the serious themes of Ernest Hemingway. It is home to America's first School of Journalism, established in 1908 at The University of Missouri.

Missouri has given birth to some of America's most famous journalists-turned-writers. Samuel Clemens, who would achieve worldwide fame as Mark Twain, was born in the Mississippi River town of Hannibal. Twain immortalized the Mississippi River in the books that captured in fiction the real life experience of his boyhood: *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn* and *Life on the Mississippi*.

Twain's earliest writings were as a journalist with his hometown newspaper, *The Hannibal Journal*. Twain's older brother, Orion, had purchased the newspaper in 1850 for $500 dollars and induced his younger brother to bring his talents to the new enterprise.

So, while Twain would achieve true fame as a writer, it was journalism that incubated his considerable talents.

Two hundred fifty miles west and fifty years later, a young newspaper reporter for *The Kansas City Star* would make a fateful decision in 1918 to follow his craving for adventure and passion for living.

Ernest Hemingway lived and worked in Kansas City for only a year if all his time spent there is added together. His longest stay was for six months as a cub reporter on the staff of *The Kansas City Star* from October 18, 1917 to April 30, 1918. The rest was a series of six-week stopovers between visits to Arkansas, Wyoming and Florida. He used that time to complete two important early works*: A Farewell to Arms* and *Death in the Afternoon.*

Hemingway, in Kansas City, like Samuel Clemens on the banks of the Mississippi, began a Nobel-laureate career as a writer working as a Missouri journalist.

Short though it may have been, Hemingway's time in Kansas City would have lasting consequence for the young writer and for American letters. He wrote of the busy, sparkling new city on the western plains: "In those days the distances were all very different, the dirt blew off the hills that now have been cut down, and Kansas City was very like Constantinople." (*God Rest You Merry Gentlemen*, 1933) Hemingway covered "fires, fights and funerals, and anything else not important enough for the other more experienced reporters..." while working at *The Star*, according to his sister, Marcelline Hemingway Sanford.

At *The Star,* he learned the spare style that would characterize his later writing. "Professional reporters stated the way things are. They did not ramble on about how things might be if this or that were true; they declared what was." (Peter Buckley, *Ernest*). In this sense, Hemingway's Kansas City experience would craft a style that would come to be known as the New Journalism of Hunter S. Thompson, Tom Wolfe and Missourian Richard Rhodes.

His Kansas City experiences would wind their way throughout Hemingway's literary works, including his famous novels and stories: *Across the River and Into the Trees, Death in the Afternoon, A Farewell to Arms, For Whom the Bell Tolls, A Moveable Feast, The Sun Also Rises, In Our Time* and

the Nick Adams stories: "A Pursuit Race," "God Rest You Merry Gentlemen" and "Soldiers' Home."

Missouri's influence is not limited to journalism. Langston Hughes, Laura Ingalls, Sara Teasdale, Tennessee Williams, Robert A. Heinlein and Edgar Snow all lived in Missouri. T.S. Eliot said: "Missouri and the Mississippi River have made a deeper impression on me than any other part of the world." (Missouri Center for the Book Online:http://books.missouri.org/heritage/sl-area.html)

The diversity of Missouri's influence on American letters continues to the present day. There is the aforementioned School of Journalism at the University of Missouri in Columbia, and the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and the *Kansas City Star.*

However, not all of Missouri's influence on the craft of journalism is urban and famous. Much of it is rooted in newspapers reporting on and published in the smaller local communities that serve as a collective microcosm of a state that is the collective microcosm of America.

Among them are the newspapers – and communities – represented in this study.

1) *The Aurora Advertiser*, Aurora, MO (weekly)
2) *Boone County Journal*, Ashland, MO (weekly)
3) *Central Missouri News,* Sedalia, MO (weekly)
4) *Hannibal Courier-Post*, Hannibal, MO (daily)
5) *Lawrence County Record*, Mount Vernon, MO (weekly)

6) *The Marshall Democrat-News*, Marshall, MO (daily)

7) *The Milan Standard*, Milan, MO (weekly)

8) *The Monett Times*, Monett, MO (daily)

9) *Southeast Missourian*, Cape Girardeau, MO (daily)

Following are brief profiles of each of the newspapers, counties and communities represented in this study.

***The Aurora Advertiser*, Aurora (weekly), Lawrence County**

Lawrence County is located in Missouri's southwest corner 185 miles south of Kansas City. The County was legally established in 1845. The first settlers in Lawrence County were of European descent. They were primarily farmers and laborers from Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee and the Carolinas who settled the land after what has come to be known as The Indian Removal of 1825. This federal action proposed during the administration of James Monroe initiated treaties for the purchase of land belonging to the Osage and Kanzas (sic) tribes and the resettlement of these Native Americans to eastern lands. The legislation did not pass until six years later, during the administration of Andrew Jackson. Many of the provisions of the treaties were subsequently violated by the federal government.

The county's historical importance is as a center for fruit farming, lead and silica mining and, most importantly, the railroad. The Frisco and Missouri Pacific Railroads had branches connecting Mt. Vernon (home of the *Lawrence County Record,* also included among the newspapers in this study) and nearby

Aurora with Kansas City and St. Louis. The area remains a major east-west transportation corridor.

The Aurora Advertiser is published Monday, Wednesday and Friday and circulated to a paid subscriber base of 3,382 (Missouri Press Association, 2000, p.6, hereinafter referred to as MPA). It is family-owned. *The Aurora Advertiser* also publishes a weekly shopper, the *Big AA Shopper,* which is circulated free on Wednesday to more than 11,000 (ibid.) and carries advertising of interest to all residents of Lawrence County.

The newspaper editions examined for this study were lighter on news and heavier on paid advertising than were many of the other newspapers of its circulation size examined for this study. The news stories concentrated on local community events.

***Boone County Journal*, Ashland (weekly), Boone County**

As with many of Missouri's counties, Boone county is rich in income from farming corn and cultivating livestock. Beyond that, however, Boone county is notable for its place as the State's center for higher education.

Boone county is home to the main campus of the University of Missouri, located at Columbia, as well as several other colleges. Education has long been the economic mainstay of the County, though it has been a center for the mining of coal, building stone and sand in previous times.

In this sense, Boone county is among the foremost economic centers of the state in cultivating an intellectual economic base for the future.

Then *Boone County Journal* reflects both the small town past of the county and its future as a growing center for the intellectual and service industries. The paper had a paid circulation of 1,775 in the year 2000 (Missouri Press Association, 2000, p.6), greater than the 1,250 size of the resident population of its home city of Ashland (ibid.)

Its news coverage of the county and its primary city, Columbia, is extensive, particularly in light of the growth of the region. The newspaper does not yet offer an online edition.

***Central Missouri News,* Sedalia (weekly), Pettis County**

Pettis county was organized in 1833 by combining portions of Cooper and Saline counties. The county was named for Missouri Congressman Spencer Pettis. It is situated on rich agricultural land 20 miles south of the Missouri River and 45 miles east of the Kansas border.

Favorable to both farming and livestock, the county produces a nearly equal value of corn and stock each year. It is also home to the annual Missouri State Fair held in Sedalia, the county seat.

As with many Missouri counties, transportation links provided by the railroad was the county's historical claim to prominence. The construction factories for the Missouri Pacific Railroad were located in Sedalia. The Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad, better known as the MKT, also had an east-west link extending through the width of the county. The MKT also maintained a public hospital in Sedalia.

Sedalia, named after the daughter of General George R. Smith, was incorporated one year after formation of the county and quickly rose to prominence because of its location at the geographic center of the state. This made the city a natural rail transportation hub for the agricultural and livestock products produced in the county. Though located on relatively open prairie, the city is notable for the thousands of trees planted throughout the town. The county courthouse is among the finer examples of courthouse architecture in the state. Sedalia is also home to one of the libraries established in 1900 as a gift from philanthropist Andrew Carnegie.

The weekly *Central Missouri News* is one of two newspapers operating from Sedalia, the other being the larger daily *Sedalia* Democrat, which had a paid daily circulation of 12, 766 in the year 2000 (MPA, 2000, p. 64). The *Central Missouri News* is a small family-owned newspaper with a paid daily circulation of 4,455 in the year 2000 (ibid., p. 40)..

Events covered by the *News* in the issues examined by this author were decidedly more small town, of interest primarily to residents of the town and its immediate environs. This small town emphasis may be related to the small size of the newspaper's staff and their long experience with the paper. The newspaper's small staff is evidenced by the fact that in several issues examined by this author, the entire front page was comprised of original stories authored by the newspaper's editor.

***Hannibal Courier-Post*, Hannibal (daily), Marion County**

In his book "The State of Missouri: An Autobiography," published in 1904, Walter Williams wrote:

> Hannibal is now an important city of manufacturing and industrial activity, having been made so by those who appreciated her superior advantages. In the immediate future, as the great manufacturing institutions of the east move to the center of population and wealth, which is along the Mississippi river, a movement which is now on and which will grow in importance in the near future, Hannibal will expand by leaps and bounds as she has never done before.
>
> …her expansion in the next few years will be on a scale calculated to amaze those who are not familiar with the trend of industrial development in the Mississippi valley. (Williams, p. 302)

Williams could not have foreseen the subsequent decline in importance of the railroad as air transport and the mid-century creation of the Interstate Highway System robbed Hannibal of its preordained significance as a center for manufacturing fueled by river and rail transportation.

The name Hannibal today still overshadows that of the county, Marion, in which the city lies. But Hannibal's present-day notoriety is more owing to its literary heritage than its economic prominence.

Hannibal is the boyhood town of Mark Twain and the setting for numerous scenes from his many famous writings. Its turn-of-the-century prominence as a center for manufacturing, rail and river transportation has been replaced by its prominence as a tourist destination.

The city was a "planned" community, with extensive scenic municipal paths and driveways along the Mississippi River and a particularly famous

"Lovers' Leap" bluff. One drive overlooking the Mississippi leads to the Mark Twain cave in which Tom Sawyer became lost. Other graveled – now asphalted – drives lead to the farms in the nearby countryside, whose crops fed the city and were transported south to St. Louis and as far north as St. Paul, Minnesota.

The city's wealth was originally due to the railroad. In fact, it was in Hannibal that the first public meeting west of the Mississippi was organized to champion the building of the railroad to the Pacific Ocean. The Hannibal & St. Joseph Railroad opened in 1855, linking the Mississippi River with that western town also famous in transportation lore, St. Joe – headquarters of The Pony Express. The Wabash followed, linking Hannibal via a bridge over The Mississippi with Buffalo. The MKT, Burlington, and Hannibal & St. Louis Railroads followed.

At one time, over one hundred factories in Hannibal engaged in the manufacture of everything from shoes, flour and cigars to railroad cars. There were three timber mills, a cold storage facility that could accommodate 50,000 barrels of apples awaiting transport and over 525 retail businesses. At nineteenth century's turn, the city was so wealthy that its postal receipts increased 30 percent in only three years, its taxes were virtually nonexistent and its transportation fees were even lower than mandated by Missouri statutes. (Williams, p.303)

Though most of that wealth and prominence is now gone, the city remains a center of tourism and a magnet for service industries and light manufacturing.

The *Hannibal Courier-Post* is Missouri's oldest newspaper, founded in 1838. The paper is a full-service daily newspaper with a four-color front page.

The *Hannibal Courier-Post* had a paid circulation of 19,503 in the year 2000 (MPA, 2000). A freely circulated affiliated shopper, the *Salt River Journal*, had a circulation of 12,500 (ibid.). The *Hannibal Courier-Post* has an online edition at www.hannibal.net. Much like the *Southeast Missourian*, that edition is highly professional editorially and graphically, offering links to everything from the entire daily content of the newspaper to a complete array of the newspaper's archives.

The editors take liberal advantage of the city's history and its connection with the real life legend that was Mark Twain, nee Samuel Clemens, in both the hardcopy and online editions of the paper. A riverboat is illustrated in the newspaper's masthead and each front page carries the daily feature "Twain Speaks," bearing an illustrated portrait of Twain and one of his famous aphorisms.

The daily editions examined for this study focused on local community events often supported with full-color photography. The *Courier-Post Weekend* carried stories of national importance, often wire-service reprints.

***Lawrence County Record (weekly),* Mount Vernon, Lawrence County**

There are 14 townships in Lawrence county. Mount Vernon is the county seat. The community typifies small-town America. It holds public gatherings on the lawn of its historic courthouse, sponsors an annual apple butter festival and even subsidizes a 25-cent taxi service.

Mount Vernon is an incorporated city with 3,942 residents in 2000 (http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/29000.html) . It is experiencing slow but steady growth and drawing attention from some service industry providers due to a low cost of living and a comparatively high quality of life.

The *Lawrence County Record* is a second newspaper from Lawrence county included among the newspapers in this study (the other being *The Aurora Advertiser*). It is a privately owned weekly newspaper founded in 1876. One of its publishers also serves as the newspaper's editor. The paper is published on Wednesdays and is distributed to a total circulation of 6,967, including both paid and free.

Though it has only a staff of 12, including the publishers, the *Lawrence County Record* is a true newspaper, not an advertiser. The issues examined by this author concentrated on local and county news and events.

***The Marshall Democrat-News*, Marshall (daily), Saline County**

Saline county is located on a broad bend of the Missouri River, approximately 60 miles east of Kansas City. Also rich in the production of corn and cattle, the county has the highest priced agricultural land in Missouri.

As is the case with much of the land adjacent to the Missouri River, Saline county is located on a substantial amount of limestone. The county's name, as it suggests, comes from the numerous salt springs that flow throughout.

Marshall is the largest town and county seat. It is located in the center of the county and, like other central Missouri locations, was an important early center for rail transportation. The Missouri Pacific line passed near Marshall on its east-west route and the Chicago & Alton Railroad used Marshall as a hub city.

The Marshall Democrat-News is a daily evening paper with a paid daily circulation of 3,987 in the year 2000 and a paid and free circulation of 12,300, just under the city's estimated total population of 12,800 (MPA, 2000, p. 61). This includes paid circulation for the *Democrat-News* and the freely circulated *Saline County Citizen.* It also publishes a Sunday edition.

The paper also hosts a web edition (www.marshallnews.com) that is updated daily. The web edition includes links to the front page, as well as to stories on health, local history and a newcomer's guide. The site also displays and is supported by local advertising.

***The Milan Standard*, Milan (weekly), Sullivan County**

Sullivan county is located in northern Missouri. The county line is only 15 miles south of the Iowa state border and 65 miles east of the Mississippi River. Its topography of rolling hills punctuated by streams is well-suited to the economic mainstays of the county, cattle ranching and horse breeding.

As with other Missouri counties located near the Mississippi or Missouri Rivers, Sullivan county was at one time richly endowed with timber, particularly elm. This lent the county its nickname, "Elm Woods." About two-thirds of the wood has been felled as timber, much of it for use as cordwood and railroad ties.

Coal mining was an important economic resource for the county, as coal is thought to lie under at least half of Sullivan county. A large vein at Milan was worked until 1895, when a shaft fire destroyed the mine. It was not reopened. Limestone is also present in large quantities because of the county's proximity to the limestone bluffs that line the Mississippi River. The stone is used for only local purposes.

Milan is the seat of Sullivan county. The city was home to two wood mills when the timber industry was at its peak. Building supplies and doors were the mills' chief products. Milan was also the site of a flour mill and two brick manufacturing plants. These industries remain active in Milan, though to a lesser extent. Lines of several railroads crisscross Sullivan county diagonally north-and-south, all passing through Milan, located in the center of the county.

The newspaper was founded in 1872 as *The Milan Standard.* Its current publisher and editor has held that position for over 45 years. *The Milan Standard* publishes every week Thursday and is circulated together with *The Harris Herald, The Milan Republican* and *The Browning Leader-Record,* formerly independent local papers absorbed over time by *The Milan Standard* . The newspaper had a paid-only circulation of just over 4,004 in the year 2000

more than double the size of the city's population of 1,816 (http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/29000.html) .

The flagship newspaper, *The Milan Standard*, carried a considerable number of stories on the beef industry in issues examined by the author. There were also stories concerning the increased used of grain storage elevators and fertilizer components such as anhydrous ammonia in the use of illegal methamphetamine, a practice of increased concern in farming communities.

The single-page papers that accompany *The Milan Standard* were devoted to stories of local concern, particularly area events and obituaries.

Like much of Missouri, Milan and Sullivan county were undergoing a boom in the late 1990s and early 2000. Stories trumpeted the region's low rate of unemployment, only 2.2 percent at the time, and a boom in housing construction.

***The Monett Times*, Monett (daily), Barry County**

Barry county borders Lawrence county on the south. It was formed in 1835 from land that comprises the present-day counties of Lawrence, Dade, McDonald, Newton, Jasper, Barton and part of Cedar. In 1840, it was reduced in size to its present-day area plus a portion of Lawrence county. The county seat was moved in 1840 to McDonald, now named McDowell.

When Lawrence county was formed in 1845, the county seat was no longer located in the center of Barry county. It was then moved to present-day Cassville, where it remains today.

Barton county, like much of southwest Missouri, is experiencing a higher rate of population growth and a lower rate of unemployment than the rest of the state. The region has become a center for light manufacturing and service industry employment.

The Monett Times began publication in 1901. It has a paid and free daily circulation of 13,400 (MPA, 2000, p. 62) and is distributed throughout Barry county and southern Lawrence county. It has three divisions: the daily newspaper with a paid circulation of 4,200, *The Monett Shopper* with a free weekly circulation of 9,500 (ibid.) and an online edition (www.monett-times.com).

The hardcopy daily edition examples studied by this author focused on local community functions and countywide news. The *Shopper* is devoted almost exclusively to advertising, and the online edition includes links to the newspaper's daily front pages as well as to each of the newspapers major sections (news, sports, etc.). The online edition also includes additional links to a separate community calendar, local obituaries and an archive of the newspaper editions.

***Southeast Missourian*, Cape Girardeau (daily), Cape Girardeau County**

Few places better express the diversity of the state of Missouri than does Cape Girardeau, located in the county of the same name. Cape Girardeau is one of the State's five original counties and among the oldest and wealthiest. It was organized in 1812 and named after Sieur de Girardot, a French officer who may have resided in the area as

early as 1705. (Official County Information online: http://www.showme.net/CapeCounty/about%20the%20county.htm)

Its French roots and rich history give the county a distinctly Southern feel while the nearby Mississippi River reminds the visitor that this is Mark Twain's Missouri too.

Cape Girardeau county is bordered on the east by the Mississippi River, which led to its early significance as a waterway freight distribution center. The St. Louis and San Francisco railroad completed a line in 1900 connecting the city of Cape Girardeau with St. Louis, one hundred miles to the north. This enhanced the prominence and importance of the city and county.

Early in its history, the county was a regional center for the timber industry. By the early 1900s, virtually all the hardwood had been harvested and the county turned to agriculture and transportation for its twin economic bases. Grains were the primary crop and Cape Girardeau's fortunate geography provided easy access top rail and riverboat distribution to nearby St. Louis and beyond.

The *Southeast Missourian* is the largest newspaper examined in this study. The *Southeast Missourian* is one of 11 daily and 27 weekly newspapers in seven states owned by Rust Communications.

Located in a beautiful historic downtown building, the *Southeast Missourian* had a daily paid circulation of 19,156 in the year 2000. The paper also publishes on Sunday, with a paid and free circulation of 24,300. Its Wednesday edition includes a shopper and has a paid and free circulation of

over 32,000 (MPA, 2000, p. 54). The newspaper also publishes a very comprehensive, daily online edition with a highly professional and contemporary look and links to major national, regional and local stories at www.semissourian.com.

Communities and the Cultural Landscape

As the descriptions above suggest, all of the communities involved in this study were relatively small, with the largest being Cape Girardeau, population 35,596 in 2000 (MPA, 2000, p. 54).

The smallest community involved in the study, Ashland, had a population of 1,235 in 2000 (MPA, 2000, p. 6), although this community is relatively close to Columbia, a medium size city of 78,915 in 2000 (MPA, 2000, p. 56) which has continued relatively rapid growth since that time. The Ashland paper, the *Boone County Journal*, presumably has some readership outside Ashland since the newspaper's circulation exceeds the size of the population of Ashland. The newspaper often publishes stories of potential interest to residents of surrounding communities, particularly Columbia which is the county seat.

The other seven communities in this study seem to fit the definition of what Clay refers to as "out there" towns. As the United States neared the end of the twentieth century, the bulk of its population, 75.2 percent in 1990, were urban dwellers (Clay, p. 172). The remainder of the nation's population lived in communities that were to a greater or lesser extent "out there," more rural, often poorer and less politically powerful than urban insiders occupying the Center:

> Anyplace Out There in the United States, one finds old back-country attitudes forever at odds with city-slicker newfangles. In reality, Out There is where most of the basic survival heavy work goes on – miners blasting and excavating, farmers raising crops, woodsmen cutting and trimming and felling, pulpwood tenders burning off the underbrush, and front-loaders and fork-lifters stacking raw materials – while forests and wetlands do their work quietly purifying air and waters. Out There is where urban attitudes, values and practices come up against ancient opponents (Clay, p. 174).

Residents of places Out There are those who because of birth or choice do not reside at the Center. Such residents and their communities often possess a unique character reflected in their attitudes (Clay, p. 176).

"Out There" communities sometimes include "…hippie homesteaders from the sixties, late-comer exurbanites and weekenders, back-country hikers and bikers, and extensive strains of nature-lovers. They fill the power vacuum left by [those] who seek the larger markets and allure of the Center" (Clay, p. 176-177).

Among the characteristics of residents of communities such as those included in this study is a deep identification with fellow residents and their shared concerns, along with a way of looking at issues that is often different from those who live in the Center.

As the author noted in the previous chapter (p. 76) Interstate highways and its two great rivers serve as boundaries for many Missouri communities, including those in this study. Those manmade and natural borders have helped preserve those communities and their distinct local cultures.

The author contends that the attitudes of the participants in this study toward the issues under consideration, market-driven journalism and audience

diversity, could well differ somewhat from the attitudes of journalists who practice their craft in larger media or more urban environments such as those media and locales examined previously by other researchers, or in the author's previous work..

Chapter Five

Small-Town Journalists: Big City Perspective?

This chapter reviews the interview data to see what they reveal about Missouri community newspaper journalists' knowledge of the phenomenon of market-driven journalism, and their understanding of the nature of their newspapers' audience. Chapter Six examines their perceptions of the effect of market driven journalism on diversity and representation of their communities in the pages of their newspapers. Chapter Seven considers the content of the papers examined for this study.

Original data gathered for this study include the information gleaned from the interviews with the 29 editorial employees of the nine newspapers participating in the study. The data from these interviews reflect a series of sometimes overlapping themes.

In determining how best to analyze and present the considerable volume of interview data – 42 hours of interview material resulting in approximately 500 pages of transcription – the author considered the following methods of presentation:

1) Presentation by geographic region within the State of Missouri;
2) Presentation by variation in job function: reporters/photographers, editors, publishers/owners, a combination of all these functions;
3) A set of themes into which responses from cases could be grouped irrespective of variations in local geography or job function.

This last method was chosen as the one that best permits the interpretation of the interview material. When useful, however, the author makes note of differences which seem related to the specific community or job function of the interview participant.

Themes are assessed considering the interview participants as a whole rather than by newspaper, job function or geographic area. This was done to identify themes common to the interview participants irrespective of other factors, again except when appropriate.

The participants and their affiliations are identified not by name or newspaper, but through a numbering system devised by the author to ensure confidentiality.

The Interview Data

The interviews were conducted from May through August 2000 with 29 reporters, editors and publishers on the staff of nine community newspapers throughout the state of Missouri. The interviews were designed to last 30 to 45 minutes. In some instances, however, they extended well beyond this target time limit due to the depth and level of interest of the individual's responses to the author's questions.

The standard questions posed to all interviewees were the following:

- Have you ever heard the term "market-driven journalism?"
- What do you understand the term to mean?
- Whom do you see as your audience?

Once transcribed, the interview data were reviewed by the author to identify common themes. Those themes correspond to the selected original supporting responses from the interviews. The author's notes and discussion are interspersed with the responses as appropriate and summarized at the conclusion of the chapter.

Understanding Market Driven Journalism: Themes and Variations

The term market-driven journalism has a brief and sometimes imprecisely defined and interpreted history as discussed in Chapter Two. The term came into being in 1994, and into common use among academic scholars in journalism and journalism professionals since that time.

The concept of market-driven journalism as explicated by McManus (1988, 1994) and Underwood (1993) is distinguished from the truism that a newspaper is a business that must pay its employees and operating costs.

The interpretation of market-driven journalism as originally explicated by McManus refers instead to a growing profit-oriented culture in media whose entities are attractive investments to prospective investors and profitable acquisitions to corporations. This "business norm" phenomenon is distinguished by McManus from a previous media culture that he contends was journalism-oriented, the "public norm" (McManus, 1994, p 1, 24-25).

The concept as discussed by McManus refers to the tendency of broad market factors to override journalism values in helping determine the content of the news in media. McManus contends these market factors – investors/owners, advertisers, news sources and consumers – influence consideration of news content

in that order, from most to least influential. These market considerations, he contends, have created a new and different environment in the media:

> Newsrooms have begun to reflect the direction of managers with MBAs rather than green eyeshades. The reader or viewer is now a "customer." The news is a "product." The circulation or signal area is now a "market" (McManus, 1994, p. 1).

McManus distinguishes this new "business norm from the traditional public or journalism norm noting that the "…principal *norm of journalism* [sic] – whether broadcast or print – is public enlightenment (McManus, 1994, p. 24).

His book *Market-Driven Journalism: Let the Citizen Beware?* (McManus, 1994) is a consideration of whether the investor and advertiser considerations – what McManus refers to (ibid.) as the norm of business (McManus, 1994, pp. 24-26) – have become a corrupting influence on the journalism norm. It is this corrupting influence McManus dubs market-driven journalism (1994, p. 26).

There is, however, a problem with such an interpretation of the term market-driven journalism when it is discussed in the context of small community newspapers such as those involved in this study: small newspapers are privately owned. They are of little or no interest as targets of acquisition by investors, and concern about forced acquisition by large media organizations is of little or no concern to small newspaper owners and publishers.

In this study, each of the nine participating newspapers was privately owned, either by individuals or family-owned groups. Owners and publishers of these newspapers have no public investors, hence no reason for concern about investors: the market dubbed most important by McManus in his explication of market-driven journalism.

Even if it is valid, the model of market-driven journalism advanced by McManus can only be applied when discussing large, publicly held media enterprises or perhaps large, privately held media organizations seeking to go public. The McManus model is therefore incomplete.

As a result, journalists at the small, privately owned newspapers involved in this study had a somewhat more varied and nuanced interpretation of market-driven journalism than did journalists at one large, publicly held media organization.

The author and his colleagues discovered in earlier secondary data-analysis studies that the concept was understood by editorial workers at a large, urban newspaper, the *Los Angeles Times*. It was not known if the respondents understood the concept referred to by the phrase market-driven journalism alone since the first two questions in the current study's standard protocol ("Have you ever heard the term "market-driven journalism?" and "What do you understand the term to mean?") were not asked of respondents during earlier studies because examination of this question was not a primary consideration of the Missouri researchers conducting the original interviews.

Nonetheless, *Times* editorial employees did have a clear idea of the meaning and potential cautionary implications for journalism of the term. Their interpretation of market-driven journalism was consistent with the interpretation of the term first advanced by McManus.

Would journalists at smaller newspapers similarly understand the term and its implications?

With few exceptions, the editorial employees who participated in the interviews for this study had some understanding of the term market-driven journalism. As the author noted earlier, however, the understanding of what constitutes market-driven journalism varies among individual respondents. To some, it is The Market, to others the marketplace and to still others, it refers to the financial component of operating the newspaper.

Among the interview participants in this study, this last interpretation of the term was the dominant, though not exclusive, theme. While many respondents indicated an understanding of the term market-driven journalism, their interpretation was more often concerned with issues close to home: for example, publishing editorial material that could offend local businesses and prospective advertisers.

The remainder of this chapter is devoted to a summary of the responses from community journalists interviewed for this study and their interpretation of market-driven journalism.

Market-Driven Journalism and the Community Newspaper Journalist: Questions and Responses

Question #1 "Have you ever heard the term 'market-driven journalism'?"

Theme #1: "Oh, yeah"

This was typical of the initial response of nine of the 29 respondents, all of whom occupied editor, publisher or publisher/owner positions.

"Oh, yeah" was the initial response of Respondent #7, and was echoed in similar language by eight other respondents. Market-driven journalism may be a

term most closely identified with scholarly or professional articles, but it was a concept that was understood by the large majority of respondents in this study.

That does not mean, however, that the affirmative respondents precisely identified the term or identified it in the same manner. The interpretation of the concept varied among respondents who expressed an understanding of the term (even as it does among scholars and journalism professionals). Some, like Respondent #7, opted for a marketplace interpretation.

> I would think it would mean that you tailor the content of the newspaper to what was selling at the time, what was popular in the marketplace at the time.

Respondent #14 readily identified the concept, but proceeded to express aloud exactly what it meant, choosing an interpretation that seemed most closely aligned with the sales and economic success of the newspaper:

> There are a couple of different versions of that going around, but I believe, well, one version we had was essentially the circulation manager would have almost equal authority as the editor as far as where some items would be placed and even what kind of features could be developed.

Many respondents did not identify or define the concept of market-driven journalism in the McManus sense of concern about the corporatization and corruption of media and the primacy of investors. Instead, they spoke of it in terms of the controversy surrounding the general influence of money on news at their newspaper, specifically whether the potential for financial gain influences the content of their publication. Such is the approach of Respondent #9, a newspaper owner/publisher:

Questioner:

> Do you feel, given the situation in which you operate that you can pay equal attention to both the editorial side of your newspaper and the business side of it?

Respondent:

> I think that is something that everybody that owns a newspaper juggles. It is tough. As long as we make our money, keep our heat on and our lights on and our salaries paid through advertising, advertising is going to be a problem for us and we'll survive. Our (advertising) comes out of [nearby cities]. We don't have that much here, we could not sustain a newspaper with the businesses that we have in (this town).
>
> …The balance, I am extremely strongly bent on delivering a good newsworthy, readable, lucid, newspaper to my readers and this is something…that's just why I'm here. It is a really important thing to me. I'm also aware that if I'm going to do this, I have to fill up those pages with ads or it's not going to be possible. I don't have angel sitting on my shoulder handing me dollars and saying go ahead and do the dream newspaper in your life. We have to earn it. So, I think we balance it pretty well.

Several respondents made note of the tension that exists between editorial gatekeepers and their relationship with advertisers. The author believes this would be a common, even appropriate, concern for newspapers operating in communities with a smaller potential pool of advertisers.

Respondent #12, a journalist, spoke of market-driven journalism in advertiser terms:

> Market driven. Yes, from the standpoint of pleasing your advertisers, which is probably not an entirely good thing from a journalism standpoint. You don’t ever want your ad department to run the paper, but that may happen at certain papers. I don’t know where. Yes, I realize where the ad dollars come from, but there are news items that have nothing to do with advertising that need to be covered from a hard news standpoint or even a feature news standpoint.

If practicing journalists sensed a conflict inherent in market-driven journalism, those whose newspaper responsibilities included marketing responsibilities saw their role, and that of their newspaper, as one that needed to accommodate both the marketplace and the news. Such was the feeling of Respondent #13 in commenting on the relationship between his department, "news marketing," and that of the newspaper's editor:

> Of all the editors I've ever gotten to work with, he's one of the best…because, you know, he understands the marketing of the newspaper and the selling of the product, and that you have got to have it (the news) when it is important. I've worked with other newspaper executives…news was something they kept close to their vests and didn't want to share. They didn't want to let you in a budget meeting or inside their little world of journalism. [The editor] is just the opposite of that. I mean as soon as a big story hits, I bet his second phone call is to me and he really lets me know what is going on. And it goes both ways. I'm out in the community a lot. I belong to a lot of clubs, a lot of organizations. I hear a lot of things and I share that back with him.

Respondent # 14, in a response that was typical of the view of most interviewees, concludes:

> …the importance of the news should govern the placement [in the paper] of the news.

Later, however, Respondent #14 clearly echoed the feelings of Respondent #12 on the need for cooperation between the editorial and business sides of their respective newspapers:

> [the editorial and the business side] go hand in hand. I've always been a strong believer that if your editorial side is strong, that will improve the other parts of your paper, that will improve circulation. A good newspaper will be read.

This ongoing tension between balancing the editorial and economic considerations of their community newspapers was similar to the responses of many journalist-respondents at the *Los Angeles Times.*

Such was the case with Respondent #27, also a newspaper publisher:

> I have heard of market-driven journalism, but I haven't dealt with it a lot… I do think that everything in our environment has an effect on our journalistic efforts. The editors would probably hit me over the head and say that they are above all of that…that we have theoretically unbiased news.
>
> To some degree, how good of a reporter you are…there *is* bias, no matter what that bias come from: whether it is economic conditions, factors in the area, financial conditions in the newspaper, even your upbringing. It has an impact on what you or we say as a newspaper. But we don't make conscious decisions about our news product based on economic factors. We have three legs that this newspaper stands on. We try to keep them as harmonious with each other as possible. There's the news content, which is as unbiased as possible. We have current opinion content, which gives us a chance to express *our* bias and *our* opinion. And there's economics. It is an ongoing tension.

For Respondent #29, a former reporter, now working on the newspaper's market development, the traditional schism between the church and state of news and economics, as suggested to many by the term market-driven journalism, is simply not practical:

> I started in the newsroom. I loved news. I never even spoke with anyone in advertising…That's nuts! It's absolutely nuts because people read ads. Later, my (spouse) and I owned a newspaper. So, all of a sudden, I wasn't in the newsroom anymore. I was in advertising. That's when I found out that people read news and people read ads. I'm not in the newsroom at all now. I've discovered that people love to read news and they love to read ads. They need both.

Respondent #1 also offered an interpretation that placed the advertiser in tension with the editor:

> Market driven journalism is that you write stories about the people who create advertising for you in order to keep them happy. It's not going to be so objective as it is going to be…you're going to have quantity about a subject that you otherwise would not write about in that quantity. And you may go out of your way to have positive stories.

But this respondent did not think it was a serious problem in small communities:

> That only happens with advertisers that work in volume. We don't have a department store that advertises in volume. Wal-Mart doesn't advertise in volume. Everybody has to shop at the grocery store, so they have to put their ads in, so they are there no matter what. I don't have a market where that's going to occur, and the heavy hitters…my industrial customers…advertise in our progress edition, some of them only once a year. They buy a full page or something like that.
>
> Otherwise, we don't really hear from them, *so I'm not in a market where the money flows based on what I write* [author's italics].

Theme #2: "Never heard of it."

While respondents in the first group indicated they had heard and could identify the term market-driven journalism, respondents in this theme group were just the opposite, expressing no familiarity with the term.

The bulk of the respondents, 14 in all, said they had not heard the term. Also, while respondents in the former group tended to be owner/publishers or editors, the respondents in this group were often the least experienced editorial employees, and in some instances, held multiple job responsibilities.

Respondent #22, a recently hired staff writer, offered a reply typical for this group when asked about the term market-driven journalism: "No, I've not actually ever heard the term 'market-driven journalism'"

But, as was the case with many respondents in this theme group, Respondent #22 was quite able to identify what the term meant at the respondent's newspaper, and offered examples:

> Does the market mean the audience or the advertising? If it's advertising, that would be here.
>
> We have a special section, The Newcomer Section. It's a tabloid thing that goes into the real news and it's huge, like 50 pages. It's mostly advertising, and people who buy a quarter page or more of the advertising will get a story in that section. I'm not saying they do that in the rest of the newspaper, but…well, if you don't want to advertise in The Newcomer Section, you know, you're not really a good advertiser in general.
>
> (By advertising) You might be able to get business and you might be something that the new people should know about.

The same respondent was even able to extend understanding of the potential pressure on advertisers to buy advertising in exchange for coverage to the issue of advertorials, advertisements placed in the editorial portion of the newspaper as thinly disguised promotion for an advertiser or product:

> I can't remember what the term is, but I've opened up the paper and seen that we'll write an article about an insurance company, and they were talking about insurance. But you could tell that the article was about the insurance company, that it was basically free advertising. So, you figured that person or that company must have been a good advertiser. They even gave the phone number and the name of the company you know, the phone number to call if you wanted insurance. That wasn't a news article!
>
> I can't stand it. You often see in a magazine something that looks like a real article, and then at the bottom it says that this is an advertisement…a little disclaimer. I just don't think that in newspaper advertising it should look like an article to the point where people get confused. It's like you're trying to mislead them.

Similarly, Respondent #24, also a less-experienced reporter, indicated no precise definition of market-driven journalism, but offered a vivid sense of its practical meaning and implications:

> No, I haven't heard (the term) market-driven journalism. I don't know. I would imagine it means journalism based on keeping the bottom line secure.
>
> I think it is an influence here. I do. I don't think it is good for journalism. I say that because I just think that there are things that might be newsworthy that might be pulled from the newspaper because they might offend this board or this business. That does happen. I've seen it happen before. It hasn't happened a lot recently, but I've seen it happen.

It was common among the less experienced editorial respondents to be less informed about a precise academic definition of market-driven journalism (or less informed than editors and publishers), but to be more indignant than their more experienced co-workers about its influence on newspapers, irrespective of their interpretation. This suggests a certain amount of idealism about journalism on the part of its less experienced practitioners.

For the experienced journalists, particularly those in editorial and publisher or owner/publisher positions, journalistic ideals are not entirely absent, but are tempered with the reality of accommodating the ongoing task of publishing their newspapers. For these respondents, market-driven journalism is a practical environment in which they work, not an academic concept. For these respondents, a model that acknowledges the marketplace or, once again, the importance of local advertisers, is more appropriate.

Respondent #5, the publisher of one of this study's smallest newspapers, echoed the frustration of several experienced journalists:

> …we don't do a particularly good job of marketing ourselves to anybody. Newspapers in general do a terrible job of practicing what they preach. You tell people that you've got to advertise. When do you take the time to sit down and advertise? Well, it's when you've got time and you've never got time. We tell the people (advertising) is a necessity if you are going to be healthy, to stay healthy, to be vibrant. You've got to do these things. And then, do we do them? Of course not. That's just stupid.
>
> I used to have a sign on the wall. I can't remember exactly what it said, but it made the point that basically our job is to analyze all problems, thoroughly think through the solutions and come up with a nicely crafted result. However, when you are up to your ass in alligators, it's difficult to remind yourself that your initial objective was to drain the swamp. We (community journalists) find ourselves up to our necks in alligators and forget about draining the swamp.

The same journalist almost immediately harkened back to the ability of community journalists to cover controversial stories in the face of financial pressures:

> I know some people who run more profitable operations, but they don't ask the right questions when they are making the hard decisions. It's not a pressure because your biggest advertiser's son just got arrested for marijuana possession. I think you can still cover that.

Political operatives who have worked in the Presidential primary elections in small states like Iowa and New Hampshire remind election campaign workers that "Local politics is retail." Similarly, Respondent #5 voiced similar recognition of the "retail" nature of local market pressures on journalists:

> It's a tough story to do when bad things happen to people you like, but you still have to do it. And, market pressures aside, you can do it with some compassion.
>
> …there's a fellow nearby whose son was on *America's Most Wanted.* I called him up, I said 'Hey, I've got a story running on your son.' He wanted to argue with me. I said, 'Look, I didn't call you up to get your permission. I called you up to tell you up front

> that it's coming out. I know you always stop and buy a paper. You may not want to buy *this* one. I'm not going to debate the issue. It's just there.'
>
> You know, I hated doing that story. But did the fact that my glasses may cost me twice as much [an implication that the story involved an eyeglass retailer/franchisee] make any difference? No, not really. It's not that kind of pressure.

Referring to larger markets and bigger dollars, Respondent #5 urged a caution for small markets, alluding to the *Los Angeles Times'* Staples Center controversy (*Los Angeles Times,* Jan. 5, 2000):

> I think it is the corporate profit pressure that is going to cause problems. And I think it may be less in big places than it will be in little ones. I think you get stupid things like out in California where the advertising side doesn't tell the news side that their special is coming out and they are going to kick back part of the money.
>
> Should you call that a kick back? Well, yes, it was. That happens every now and then. But those people [advertising supplement representatives] are so removed that your news side is isolated and insulated from your business side.
>
> I've had worse things happen because of money pressures on smaller papers…simply because you can tweak another half percent here by cutting a couple of people, or half a person. So then you have fewer staff and so then you get all the easy stuff instead of all the stuff. I think to an extent, market driven journalism is what *we* practice.

Respondent # 5 is confirming one of this author's finding in previous studies of market-driven journalism. Organizational consolidation and corporatization is generally viewed in the academic world and some segments of the political community as the enemy of diversity in coverage because such consolidation limits the number of voices offered to readers (Compaine, B. & Gomery, D., 2000).

However, it might be the case that the larger pool of resources available in a larger news organization will, when properly deployed, actually increase the

number of voices in the news product. Imagine, then, the potential positive effects when a number of geographically dispersed newspapers are afforded the resources of a well-financed ownership group.

Is big always bad in journalism (Farhi, P., 1999)? Perhaps market-driven journalism, in those instances when it is practiced, is driven less by the pressure to earn advertising revenue and more by the absence of resources, in turn necessitating the need to generate those financial resources from another revenue stream, just to keep the paper in business.

Theme #3: "Never heard of it, can't tell you what it means, can't see that it would do any harm."

The remaining six respondents fit within this theme group. However, this was only because they identified themselves as having no idea of the meaning of the term. When questioned more in depth, they revealed knowledge of market-driven journalism and its effects similar to the knowledge of individuals in theme group #2, those who had not heard the term, but offered a reasonable interpretation of its meaning.

The primary substantive distinctions between these respondents and those in theme group #2, aside from the issue of self-identification, are:

1) That members in this group identified no potential negative influence from market-driven journalism, however they interpreted the term;

2) these respondents all occupied positions on their newspapers that had multiple responsibilities, such as selling advertising and writing the local community events page;

3) these respondents did not identify themselves as journalists in terms of their profession or their attitude toward their work: they had a job to do.

Like Respondent #8, members of this group saw their newspaper as having constituent parts of news and advertising, but no journalistic mission: they saw no firm distinction between the journalism norm and the business norm. Again, however, their interpretation of market-driven referred to concerns about advertisers (the author's proposition), not prospective investors (the McManus model):

> …if you don't have news, then you don't have a paper. If you don't have ads, then you don't have a paper. So, it pretty well balances out. *Of course, you'd like to have more advertising than news* [italics mine], but it pretty well balances out.

While only this respondent voiced a preference for more advertising than news content, the other respondents in this theme group seemed similarly less concerned about the possibility that advertising concerns would be more prominent in their papers than editorial concerns.

It should be noted that the respondents in this group all worked at newspapers whose local economies were somewhat depressed or in a state of flux, though the initial interviews were conducted at a time when the nation's economy was more robust.

As is the case with many smaller Midwest and Southern towns, the communities that were home to this group of respondents were rural, even relative to other communities in the study. The downtowns were falling victim to the closing of retail businesses, primarily mom-and-pop retail businesses that closed as a result of the death or retirement of the owners, the decision of their children to

move away or pursue other types of work, or economic failure after many years in business.

This fading away of small town American character in these "out there" communities to use the Clay term (1994, p. 174) was neatly summarized by Respondent #8, referring to changes in advertising at the respondent's newspaper:

> Stores have closed up. The advertising's gone away. The downtown…it's sort of like a depressed retail downtown. It's better than it used to be. There's a café that came in and a couple of other stores, but there was nothing else. So, it's better than it was. Old stores though…matter of fact, they are pretty well gone. I can't even think of any that was handed down by generation. I can't think of any.

The respondent then adds poignantly: "This is probably the only one" [that has been handed down to the next generation].

Know Your Audience

If the news is church and, for the communities in this study, the advertising is state, the modern urban newspaper often has a third institutional entity on which it can rely to locate it audience: marketing research. When newspapers became a mass advertising medium in the second third of the last century, audience (now "marketing") research became the standard tool used by newspapers to identify their audience for their own use and for the use of prospective advertisers.

Television emerged as the primary source for news in the 1970s and began to compete with newspapers for audience and advertisers (Lichty, 1992). Newspaper readership became stagnant, the typical reader older, and not always as attractive to advertisers as the younger demographic typical of the television viewer.

Other technologies were developed and created more competition for advertisers. Cable television was invented in 1948 to overcome broadcast signal reception difficulties in the rolling hill rural areas of states like Pennsylvania. (http://inventors.about.com/library/inventors/blcabletelevision.htm, 2004).

With the increase in urbanization in subsequent decades, cable television became available to most of the U.S. television audience.

Satellite television was developed in part to overcome the lack of broadcast or cable television availability in some parts of the U.S. Television, already a formidable competitor for the media's advertising dollar, grew more capable of reaching an audience separated by geography and demography.

The expansion of analog and digital channel choices during the late 1990s and the early part of this century, along with the availability of so many channel choices through varied technologies, made audience research increasingly difficult to validate, increasingly less reliable because of audience fragmentation (Daozhang and Kiewit, 1987). Standard means of measuring the mass television audience, primarily Nielsen ratings, are no longer regarded as completely accurate means of identifying viewers or their viewing choices (Conlin, 1999).

The widespread diffusion of the Internet – now available to an estimated 60 percent of the population of the U.S. after only nine years in common use – broadband technology and wireless Internet access -- has created a dramatic set of problems for those attempting to locate viewers or readers, or identify program and product choices. These concerns have led web bloggers, Internet users who maintain and contribute to sites that specialize in areas of individual interest, to

actively petition for the elimination of the use of Nielsen ratings (http://www.petitionspot.com/petitions/nonielsen), a prospect that has gained support from traditional advertisers and broadcasters (Reuters, July 8, 2004).

Audience fragmentation is viewed as a threat to the very system of revenue through advertising that funds the largest portion of the cost of delivering media. For newspapers, a problem that began with simple competition with another medium has grown to a crisis that many observers believe could jeopardize the future of newspapers as a mass medium and relegate a diminished number of newspapers to increasingly elite status.

If audience fragmentation and diffusion could affect large, urban newspapers, it would seem to be a harbinger of yet more economic difficulties for smaller community newspapers.

This is not borne out by the results of the author's interviews with the 29 respondents from across one of America's most typical states. In fact, the single most striking feature of the interviews to this observer was the extent to which all respondents clearly and emphatically identified their newspaper's audience.

The respondents' description of their audience was often vivid, particularly in terms of the history of the residents and the effects wrought by changes in the audience composition, as is the case in the summary by Respondent #9, a publisher:

> [This] is an old, old community…an old rural community basically, and it was very small for many years, in part because the railroad didn't come through here.
>
> With the growth of [neighboring towns], the downtown more or less died and the community's population decreased with it. There is a core of wonderful old citizens whose families have a long history in this area, some of them all the way back to 1819 and 1820. They have been here

> for what seems like forever and this is very much the group we want to reach.
>
> We find interestingly enough that this group of people, even though they are rural and even though their education levels may not be very, very high, comprise the bulk of our readers because most of them were brought up on the King James version of The Bible. It is a community that is religious and has Bible-reading folks and that, I believe, is what contributes to their high reading skills.

The same respondent goes on to identify a new "sector" of the audience. That response merits quoting at length because it incorporates an understanding of the local audience and culture the author believes is unique to community journalists like those participating in this study:

> There is a second group. Since we came here, the city has been growing relatively rapidly, and it has grown extremely rapidly in the last 10 years. Ours is the fastest growing small town in this state.
>
> The beautiful land around here…there's river hills and lots of beautiful land available. Initially, it was available at a pretty good price, but not anymore. Folks who are professional people…what's more natural than for them to buy a couple of acres here, build a nice house. So if you ride on rural roads anywhere around _____, you are going to find beautiful homes built around here.
>
> This is a much more affluent group. As a matter of fact, our church did a survey of [this part of] the county and the average income is around $65,000.
>
> This is a totally different group and they are changing this community rapidly. They are changing it into a much hipper place than it has been in the past.
>
> Now there is a third constituency, an extremely interesting group. That group consists of artists, people who want to get back to the land, ecologists, people who raise goats and spin fine wool.
>
> So this audience gives us a huge possibility and these different groups tend to get along quite well, it's really quite surprising. The guy who drives an SUV and wears Eddie Bauer sitting side-by-side with a real farmer wearing real farm clothes and driving a real truck.

> They get along very well because a lot of their interests are the same. They care about the land. They care about pretty basic things. They want good schools. They want their kids brought up right. Our basic subscribers come from those groups pretty much.

This is an almost precisely synonymous description of residents of similar rural communities noted earlier in this study by Clay (p. 105) and observed by the author in several of this study's participating communities.

Many of the respondents participating in this study were inclined to define their audience in terms of shared personal characteristics and influences: geography, religion and changing local economies were among the more frequently cited. The description of the characteristics of the audiences of the journalist respondents is often quite vivid, like that of Respondent #26, an editor:

> We have a lot of long-time loyal readers. That core is unchanging. You see it in a variety of ways…when you talk to the people that you see in the community, they'll say: 'I've been reading your paper for 35 years,' or "I've been reading your paper for 20 years.' That's a large group.
>
> I think our circulation figures bear out that there's a large group of people who renew their subscriptions annually without question. Those people have taken the paper for years and years and just assume they are always going to take it, so paying a year in advance is a wise investment as far as they are concerned.
>
> I think we have an audience that we have created through our education program in the schools. Some teachers find it to be a good teaching tool. Other teachers find it to be easier than lesson plans. I think we have a pretty good system of getting younger people interested in our newspaper.
>
> The older readers…well, they were trained to be newspaper readers. Older people, I think, developed reading habits and there weren't so many other distractions. Most American homes 20, 30 years ago had two or three, or at least one, newspaper in the home. As far as leisure time activity, reading the newspaper was a habit easily developed, not as easily developed now because young people have a thousand other things they can do with their time and they are making choices about how to spend that time.

On occasion, respondents go beyond description of their audience/readers and discuss changing audiences and the changing dynamics of the industry. Often, these insights are quite knowledgeable, sometimes wistful. Again, Respondent #26:

> I have a little soapbox I get on when I hear the newspaper industry talk about fewer readers, fewer subscribers to newspapers at every meeting you go to. This started 20 years ago when circulation figures first started to waver and show a downward trend and, of course, newspaper people are wonderful for shooting themselves in the foot describing your own worst fears as reality.
>
> In fact, there was an opportunity in my mind 20 years ago that would have kept newspaper circulation from declining in the face of all those other distractions. I got fed up going to meeting after meeting hearing study after study telling me people weren't reading the newspaper anymore because they didn't have the time to read the newspaper anymore. After awhile, it started sounding like something had happened to the rotation of the earth around the sun or the world twirled in its orbit and it speeded up, and we didn't have 24 hours in a day anymore; we had 23 hours and 15 minutes. And by the time this notion really got a head of steam – this whole industry feeling there was no time to read the newspaper – we were down to maybe 18 or 19 hours in a day.
>
> So, who's our audience? Same people they were 25, 30 years ago…but without as many readers coming in to fill the gap

The respondents display considerable knowledge about the precise demographic characteristics of their readers. Consider this audience description by Respondent #13:

> [Our readers] are between 45 and 65 years of age, middle to upper class, equally male and female. We struggle for readers in the lower age groups.

Or this description by Respondent #17:

> Our readers are rural and work mostly in agriculture. They are in their late 30s and older. Most are parents and are interested in school news.

Or that of Respondent #18, an editor:

> Our demographics show that [our readers] are older, less well educated and often retired from the shoe factories that were located here.

Some respondents, again striking a wistful note, mingled a description of their newspaper's readers with feelings on the role of the newspaper in their community. A typical comment of this variety came from Respondent #29, who now works in advertising after several years as a news writer and editor:

> We attract the more educated people of course. Newspapers tend to have a more upscale audience rather than the general lower socio-economic status individual, which is unfortunate because people could pull themselves up if they choose to be educated. While we have a wide spectrum of readers, the bulk of our readers would be middle-aged rather than in the lower age groups. So, primarily the more educated and the more affluent.

Audience descriptions also demonstrated keen awareness of the public service role, the journalism norm, served by community newspapers and how that role is being affected by the changing demographics of the communities whose newspapers were included in this study. The audience description of Respondent #16, a news editor, demonstrates a keen awareness of the public service role of a newspaper and of the changing face of the newspaper's readership:

> Our demographics are the same as other newspapers in this county. Residents here are rural and a bit older than the U.S. norm. I would like the newspaper to be a voice for the people, some of the ethnic minorities in town, the African American population. I want to address things that may not get addressed in a lot of small town newspapers. I would like to stay away from being the newspaper of the white upper middle class long term residents. I want to be more than that.

America's Changing Demographics

Understanding and marketing to the "changing face" of America is a potential growth industry. On March 17, 2004, the U.S. Census Bureau released a detailed set of projections for the ethnic composition of the U.S. population of the future. (www. census.gov.) That report forecasts a higher birth rate among

Hispanics and a surge in Asian immigration that will transform the ethnic makeup of America.

The report estimates the proportion of the American population that is "non-Hispanic white" will drop to close to 50 percent by the year 2050, growing a mere seven percent. Non-Hispanic whites constituted 70 percent of the U.S. population according to the 2000 Census.

The proportion of the U.S. population that is Hispanic is projected to nearly double, from 12.6 percent in the year 2000 to 24.4 percent in 2050, an increase of 188 percent. (Financial Times, 2004, p. 4)

America's African American population, which was approximately the same in the year 2000 as the Hispanic population, will grow as well though more slowly, constituting an estimated 14.6 percent of the total U.S. population by 2050. (ibid.)

The U.S. Census Bureau projects that America's Asian population will rise 213 percent by the year 2050, from 3.8 percent of the total U.S. population in 2000 to eight percent in 2050. The nation's Black population will increase a much lower 71 percent to make up 14.6 percent of total U.S. population by 2050. (ibid.)

Overall, total U.S. population is estimated to nearly double by 2050 from the year 2000 and become considerably older, this due to a lower overall birth rate and the aging of the Baby Boom generation (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002).[4]

[4] Data for the individual states are the responsibility of each state's demographer. While gross projections for the United States are available through 2050, the latest Missouri information available at the time of this writing was only through July 1, 2002. Updated information and longer term projections are scheduled to be available sometime in 2004. Current information is available on the individual Missouri page at http ://mcdc.missouri.edu/trends/estproj_apr2004.pdf

These changes are likely to have profound effects on every aspect of American society from immigration policy to health care and retirement benefits. Surely, these changes will have an enormous impact on the nature of our media and the interaction of the media with the citizenry. For newspapers, these changes represent an enormous challenge, and perhaps an equally enormous opportunity.

The respondents in this study were, in some respects, the canary in the coal mine when they discussed the nature of their readership, often offering hints and insight about the future composition of their readership.

Responses often showed early evidence of political savvy. When these interviews were conducted, during the Bush-Gore Presidential political campaign, suburban "soccer moms" were deemed the desirable voter demographic. But Respondent #18 identified another group as gaining significant representation in the newspaper's audience, one that achieved visibility in 2003-2004, "NASCAR dads:"

> [Considering my audience] I am looking at what we cover and wonder if we spend too much time covering City Hall. I don't want to think that, but maybe we should be covering go-cart races, maybe we should be covering wrestling, maybe we should be covering…oh, what's that racing now…NASCAR. It's the biggest sport in the country, so a lot of my audience probably cares about that….

By far, however, the most significant changes in audience composition mentioned by respondents concerned demographic change, particularly ethnicity.

Consider the description of Respondent #10, an editor, when discussing the ways in which their newspaper's audience is changing:

> This area is now getting quite a few Hispanic residents, and some East Indians as well. They come here and buy motels and run them as a family business…that and things like Seven-Elevens.

Or this, by Respondent #11, a reporter:

> In the past several years, there has been a dramatic increase in the Hispanic population. That's something of a new thing in this area. We've gone to some lengths to cover things like the Hispanic Coalition that is in town now and we've covered cultural events in the Hispanic community as we would any of the usual events in this area.

The idea of increasing ethnic diversity was a constant for most of the respondents in the survey. Virtually every respondent commented on these changes, foretelling what it would take the U.S. Census Bureau four more years and a thorough national census to report: that the nation's population and the prospective newspaper audience is changing.

Respondents did not seem at all troubled by these changes in their audience composition; in fact, they saw it as being as much a part of the changing mosaic of American life as did their urban journalist counterparts.

During the process of interviewing journalists at the *Los Angeles Times*, one editor remarked to Missouri researchers on the changes in the *Times* readership as being similar with changes that had taken place in other parts of the nation, and that this was the natural evolution fostered in America:

> The history of journalism is a tension between the idealism of the profession and the people who have worked in it... and the fact that we are a moneymaking operation. That's always driven what the newspaper is. The idea that a newspaper could be an objective source of information that citizens could rely on was itself a marketing tool used to build up circulation after years of Yellow Journalism and all that. So, I think there's a dialectic going on here. On the one hand, here there's a huge market that the newspaper has the potential (to reach). The newspaper knows that it has to respond for its own survival. Miami realized long ago that it was becoming a Cuban town. (We) are realizing that, too. At the same time, there are a lot of people who realize that it [diversity] is the right thing to do anyway. That it's more fair, more open... because those are the values with which Americans were brought up. That was what makes us a good country; that's why

> we should be proud to be American. We open our arms to everybody. It is both a moral and economic issue here (in Gross et al., 2002, p. 270).

Compare that statement with the comments of Respondent #11 in this study:

> America itself was founded upon diversity. We all came from different cultures and traditions and formed a country and we have always been based on that. You still have people coming here from all over the world, not only from the Hispanic countries, but from the Orient. You still have people coming from Europe. The diversity of this nation has been here since the founding of this nation.

Respondents in this study also seemed to have a keen sense of the reasons their audience is changing. For most, it seems a matter of changing local economies and perceived economic opportunity.

Respondent #16, a reporter, explains the increase in the Hispanic population in the local community:

A lot of it is employers. We have two major food processing businesses here: _____, which does pork and _____, which does frozen foods.

Respondent #22, a reporter with a newspaper in the adjacent county, notes the same phenomenon:

> If you divided the community, as far as the local culture goes, you'd have all the Mexican people in the working class. You know, they are at the factories and they are recruited to come here because they need people. People around here, agricultural or not…eight, nine dollars an hour and in the middle of nowhere…no one wants to butcher hogs.
>
> [It's a killing operation]…chicken, hogs. The [a brand name] over here, the [a poultry processor] over there, that's the chicken. And then [a brand name pork processor] is hogs. They are killing operations.

Respondent #19, employed by a different newspaper in a different community, offers a similar explanation:

> Well, in just the last four or five years, I would say we have had a large increase in the population of Mexicans…of Hispanic people because of the emergence of [an agricultural packing] out here…about five miles west of town.
>
> It's a chicken processing plant, and they have brought in a lot of Mexican Americans as their labor force. A lot of times their housing is being bought, paid for. We do a lot of features on [the plant]. We even devote a full, special section to them at different times of the year.

This shift in the industrial base of many Missouri communities may account for much of the perceived change in the ethnic make-up of the population in many Missouri communities.

As in many midwestern states, well-paying manufacturing jobs are being lost. Lower paying service and light manufacturing jobs are often replacing them. But while these jobs are lower paying and often less desirable, they require fewer job skills, less experience and can accommodate lower levels of literacy and English language fluency.

Respondent #18 echoes a now-familiar tale of churn in the manufacturing industries that formerly provided a solid economic base for rural communities like those in this study:

> We're in a financial crunch right now. [The town] is in a bit of a recession and the newspaper is feeling it.
>
> _____ has been our biggest plant and they've undergone a series of layoffs this last year. Now the plant is being sold and they'll know soon what's going to happen. A lot of people laid off, a lot of people have had their hours cut and no one knows what is going to happen. That brings the housing market and the car market to a grinding halt. A lot of houses for sale that nobody's buying.
>
> And then there's _____…it has gone through a number of changes. But there are always rumors. They have some layoffs out there now. My husband said that "they said" it's going to be purchased by another big manufacturer. So the economics of the town are sort of in question.

These comments sound quite familiar in a political year in which two important economic issues are the decline of manufacturing industry in the American midwest, and the "outsourcing" of good paying jobs to lower-wage, often foreign, competition. Those jobs are being replaced with lower-paying, less skilled work.

It would not be accurate to suggest that the journalists in all of the communities included in this study were equally glum about the economic prospects of their communities and of the impact on their newspapers. It is more accurate to state that, whether their communities were economically stable or economically threatened, the journalist-respondents involved in this study were quite perceptive in their assessment of the local situation, the changes that were taking place and the potential effect of those changes on their communities, their newspapers and even their nation.

As the author noted in earlier chapters, Missouri's geographic, demographic and transportation histories are unique and have resulted in a legacy that makes its regional characteristics unique. Those histories and those resulting characteristics often found their way into this study's respondents with respect to audience composition.

Respondent #1 discusses how the local topography and highways have facilitated the growth of certain industries and population changes.

> [_____] is 8, 10, 12 miles south of Interstate 44 We are on what the highway department is developing into Highway 60, Highway 37 corridor. Highway 37 was supposed to do what Highway 71 has now become and do the main artery into [_____and _____], where the [poultry processor] and [large retailer] folks are. Well 37 by

> and large serves that function because 71 is so far that way it runs straight to [_____] so, but the artery of 37 and 60 to [_____] for the Hispanic people seems to be extremely significant because it comes up through the poultry packing industry. It comes straight past Georgia's. It comes straight through [_____] where [a packing plant] employs one thousand people. This, for that particular industry is much more significant than say when you get over into [_____ and _____] counties on 71 where the ground isn't flat.
>
> Flatness here facilitates the poultry industry, the growers, and they have grown up around the processing plants, in turn have grown into complexes, each of which I believe – I believe [a second poultry plant] has a hatchery and a feed mill right there. Now, they say it is in the Ozarks when you are in [_____], but in fact it is really sort of the foothills. But once you get to [_____]…or south, due south…once you get past [_____], about ten miles, it is like going to _____, going south from _____, suddenly there is hills. Ten to 15 miles south of [_____] is the State Park. It's not even that far. It's more like eight. Yes, bam, there they are. I think the roads are a major factor in the way the businesses and people have changed in this area.

In some respects, the perceived volume of Hispanic immigration into several Missouri counties is taking on an Urban Myth-like quality. Respondent #1 suggests the large scale immigration began in 1992 and suggests an unusual catalyst for this inflow:

> Hispanics started coming here in 1992. It is just an odd date. There is a story, though we have never…we can't confirm it – that there is a sign somewhere in Mexico that say "If you want a good job, go to [a processor of] foods in [_____], Missouri." People claim to have seen the sign, but no one has seen a picture of it yet. But that is when they started coming and they kept coming.

Geographic and topographic references, though not always as detailed as that of Respondent #1 above, were often used by all respondents in discussing a variety of phenomena: their newspaper audience, local events, local population concentrations and local industry. Perhaps it is true that this form of reference is a feature of small town life. However, such detailed descriptions must have some

unique features to describe: an extensive system of local highways as in the description above, a varied topography population or industrial changes. In other words, such detailed descriptions could not be a common form of reference anywhere.

The author interprets this as either a feature of the uniqueness of Missouri or of communities of this size and character wherever they might be located. There are other audience descriptions that reflect issues that are all too familiar in small town America. Among those issues is the old-young population bifurcation noted by Respondent #20, a reporter:

> One of the things that struck me when I first moved here was that it is populated by older people. When I moved here this June, the college was not in session and they were not having summer classes at that time. So, I was just out of college, I was 22 years old and there was nobody anywhere that was my age. I would see all these high school people, and then I would see all these older people.
>
> I felt like I was in an episode of *The X-Files*: I was expecting people to come and take me away in the middle of the night. And so, there are older people who have come here to settle and retire and be happy. And there are younger people who want to get the heck out of here. That is a very interesting dichotomy.

The Internet "Boom" And the Newspaper Audience

During the interviews, repeated references to the Internet and it potential influence on the future of newspaper were made by several respondents. The author did not anticipate these references since standard questions asked of all respondents did not include any questions or direct references to the Internet, nor to its potential effect on the future of newspapers.

However, the respondents' interest in the Internet and what are now termed

online editions of newspapers was unforced and considerable. This may be a function of the time period during which the interviews were conducted. The interviews were conducted in 2000 just as the dot.com bubble was beginning to burst, and before the economic downturn in 2001 precipitated by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

The following responses may seem out of place in a discussion about market-driven journalism. However, respondents' frequent references to the Internet may reflect their view of technology as a possible Information Age technological solution to an Industrial Age problem: how to remain financially sound in a newspaper world facing increasing costs for ink, newsprint and personnel, and a shrinking, aging and largely rural, readership.

The promise of the Internet may well have been dimmed by events that have taken place since these interviews were conducted; however, this does not negate the profound, potentially beneficial, effect that technology is likely to have on the future of newspapers. For that reason, and because the respondents thought their comments to be relevant in a discussion of market-driven journalism as they interpreted the term, the author has chosen to include these responses.

A new century can be the time of an intersection between the legacy of the past and the promise of the future. Such was the case of the turn into the twentieth century on display at the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904.

Respondents in this study certainly seemed to have both history and portent in mind. At the year 2000 Millennium, the world's computers continued to process information in defiance of a possible shutdown predicted by doomsayers (Asian

Review of Business and Technology, July, 1997). All was well.

The Information Revolution of the twenty-first century seemed poised to supplant the Industrial Revolution of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Each Internet company Initial Public Offering of stock witnessed a dizzying escalation in stock prices for companies that had yet to earn their first dollar. One .com company sponsored an advertisement in that year's Super Bowl that featured a 30-second visual of a red dot. The ad asked the question: "Why are we paying $30 million for this spot?" And answered it: "Because we can." (Kanner, 2004) The pre-Depression hubris of The Great Gatsby era had returned. It would begin to slip in the spring of the new Millennium and collapse, figuratively and literally, soon after.

The respondents were interviewed in the time frame between two significant events: the dot-com collapse that began in spring 2000 and the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, September 11, 2001.

The direct effects, if any, of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks cannot be reflected in the interviews. However, the Internet and its influence on the future of these newspapers' audiences was already a hot topic.

No direct questions were included about the Internet and its potential effects, but the topic is sometimes reflected in the comments of many of the respondents.

Respondents who did comment on the potential of the Internet seemed mixed in their attitudes toward its benefit as a means of expanding their newspaper's existing audience or reaching their present audience in a new way. Attitudes toward the Internet were not contingent on the relative size of the newspapers included in

this study since all are relatively small. Rather, attitudes toward the potential of the Internet seemed contingent on the vision of those in editorial and publisher positions at the respective newspaper, and all respondents agreed that the issue would need to be addressed.

Consider the mixed feelings reflected in the comments of Respondent #5, a publisher whose newspaper did not yet have an online edition:

> I'm so damned tired of Internet, Internet, Internet, but it is a fact of life. I mean when you came in, I was looking on the Internet for a particular thing. We (the newspaper) have to address that someway or another. We have to position ourselves someway or another to be an integral part or we won't be part of anyone's information system…so, you know, "me too" on the Internet. Don't you just get sick of it?

At the time the interviews were conducted, three of the newspapers included in this study published online editions: *The Hannibal Courier-Post, The Marshall Democrat-News and* the *Southeast Missourian.* All are dailies. Since then, a fourth daily has added an online edition, *The Monett Times*. When one considers the relatively small circulation of these newspapers, it may seem somewhat surprising that four of the nine newspapers included in this study publish daily online editions. However, many respondents seem to have a good grasp of the potential of Internet editions of newspapers and the potential for expanding audience and being more inclusive of the audience members.

Business management experts have in recent years cited nimbleness in adapting to change as an important characteristic for the continuing success of small businesses and the Internet as one technology that could aided nimbleness: witness the early political success of the Howard Dean 2004 Democratic Presidential nomination campaign in using an Internet-based campaign to garner support and

campaign contributions, a model replicated by 2004 Democratic Presidential Nominee John Kerry.

One need not be a national political figure to have seen the benefit of being swiftly responsive to changing circumstances. Some respondents in this study even saw this coming well ahead of the curve. Consider the view of Respondent #21, a publisher whose newspaper operation had already become wired, along with this publisher's view of the future, which sounds like Silicon Valley meets the Mighty Mississippi:

> The main thing about being a small newspaper is that we are much more nimble in terms of technology. We can shift systems a lot quicker than when you buy into these huge front end systems that the major metros deal with. We don't even have a chemical darkroom in this building.
>
> We are completely digital. What we are going to be doing on The Internet I think is going to be setting some standards. There is excitement here about doing some fun work and living in a community that is very family-oriented.
>
> It's [the newspaper's business model] attractive to the Internet guys. And the Internet companies want to do business with us now because we understand their business models. I understand what can be done if there is enough promotion….
>
> We are going to be partnering with a number of groups that are in non-metro areas and that are frustrated with the metro relationships because they are just one more community experiment for the metros. This is a fun company.

However, as this respondent continued his description of the newspaper's future, it began to foreshadow the concerns expressed by many about market-driven journalism, that it will be more market-driven than journalism:

> A friend of mine is a founder of PriceLine [a stock evaluation company]…a fascinating guy with a newspaper background. Internet companies take

> content and put it under business development [structurally]. They do it specifically for the reason that they want content to drive revenue. So, there is no editorial department. It is now "Business Functions." If this content doesn't draw eyeballs [the broadcast advertising term for viewers], we change content. There are two ways of looking at that. They look at it as being absolutely market-sensitive, to say we are giving what the market wants.
>
> [Alluding to the acquaintance's point of view] The newspaper industry is fuddy-duddy. They care about editorial obligations and responsibility, we care about serving the market. We are going to put on the best content. We are going to give the best user experience to the consumer.
>
> They might start that early on. Then they start getting dangled in front of them preferential treatment to certain content because of the promise of better revenue. And all of a sudden the best user experience becomes decent enough user experience to hold on to the market while maximizing the revenue. I think that is incredibly dangerous.

This respondent then identified the challenge to newspapers that will result as they move from newsprint to the Internet:

> So we are going to do marketing surveys to really get to understand our market better and to get a grip on Internet penetration, how people use the Internet here.
>
> Newspapers have to be aware of that. If they aren't aware of the markets, if they just sit up there in an Ivory Tower and say 'We will give you only what we think needs to be given to the market community and we will make those decisions'…well, that worked maybe when you were a single newspaper town and there weren't as many outlets and it was just print. That is doomed to failure on The Internet because the Internet is interactive: it can be one to one on there.
>
> So, if you go in there and you are going to say this and only this and there is not going to be community interaction…if it is just going to be the content of the newspaper and you are not going to be empowering the community to create your site, it's a problem.
>
> If you don't build in interaction, if you don't bring the user into the experience, if you don't give them some of the things that they want, then the eyeballs will go in the other direction. And, ultimately, the laws of economics say you are in a precarious business situation.

The publisher sees marketing this newspaper to the audience as empowering.

One of the editors of the same newspaper, Respondent #15, offers a possible explanation for the publisher's comments regarding the need for the newspaper to address the wants and needs of its audience:

> I think the audience for the newspaper is getting more elitist. The reality is that's where we are headed. I remember that is one of the things I read when I was in journalism grad school…I read that very early. I've thought about it a lot since and I think that it is becoming true: the newspaper audience is an elitist audience.
>
> I don't why exactly I think the audience is elitist. Higher intelligence? The world is changing to such an extent. So, I honestly can't answer why I think it is an elitist audience. Education levels keep moving up, yet circulation continues to decline. It is just a reality. It gives me cause for concern.

While concern for the future of the newspaper is this editor's reality and a certain ambivalence concerning the Internet newspaper is the publisher's reality, other respondents are readily embracing the Internet as a means of technologically expanding audience size and reach. This was particularly noticeable in the comments of Respondent #1, whose newspaper was the smallest in circulation of those posting an online edition at the time of this interview:

> …one thing that is fascinating, and we still don't know what it means, is our web pages. We post about five top news stories a day, and about five other stories…sports, society pages, photos. We're getting 1,800 hits a day! We don't know what that means, but there are a lot of people out there who want to see what's in [this newspaper]. We don't know where all those people are coming from and what's bringing them to the newspaper.

Irrespective of the reason, this respondent, also and editor, is clearly pleased with this newly found source of readership. The tension between having available technologies that can help increase a newspaper's audience but may pose a

perceived threat to the integrity of the journalism product is evident in the responses of these community newspaper journalists perhaps more so than among their urban newspaper counterparts.

A previously published secondary data analysis by this author and his colleagues found that editorial employees at the *Los Angeles Times* were of the belief that concern for their newspaper's market was not driving the content of the newspaper. Certainly, however, they did voice some legitimate concerns. Respondent #37 in that earlier study (Gross, et. al., 2001) issued the caution (noted earlier in this study) voiced by many who fear the influence of economic concerns in the newsroom: "If you start monkeying with the content, that's where most of us are having a problem." That responded then added:

> I've never seen that happen (here). I've never been told 'write this story differently (because of financial concerns)…and I don't know anyone who has (been told to do that.

The authors concluded that study and one that followed (Gross, et.al., 2002) by noting that the concerns about market-driven journalism that originated with McManus work in broadcast journalism may not be as prevalent in print journalism, and certainly not in the community newspaper environment, Also, there is less apprehension about market and marketplace influences among print journalists than among broadcast journalists, although concerns about financial matters are often expressed. The authors suggested that this may be due to the more severe economic pressures that exist in broadcast journalism.

It is reasonable to assume that community newspapers may be more vulnerable to the pressure of the bottom line because they may operate on thinner

profit margins and usually have a smaller prospective base of advertisers in communities that are often experiencing economic difficulties. Certainly that did seem to be the feeling among respondents in this study.

Interpreting the Interview Data

Knowledge of Market-driven Journalism

As discussed in Chapter Two (pp. 28-31) and earlier in this chapter (pp. 108-109), the term market-driven journalism has different models and can have several different meanings depending on whether the phenomenon is studied functionally in (local) broadcast television (Underwood, 1993; McManus, 1988, 1994) or large newspapers (Beam, 2003, 1998; Demers, 1996a, a996b, 1998a, 1998b).

McManus offers a model in which prospective investors are most influential in news content decisions (1994, pp. 20-32), whereas news consumers (the marketplace) are the least influential. The marketplace model offered by Beaudoin and Thorson (2001) allows far more influence from consumers.

The author of the present study believes there may another model, one influenced by the scale and location of the particular media outlet being studied, community newspapers in this instance.

In this model, economic factors contributing to the overall financial wellbeing of the media outlet, including advertisers, assume more importance for the simple reason that there are fewer available financial resources and the loss of any one can have a dramatic effect on the newspaper's financial health, indeed survival..

This takes form in the present study in the author's operational definition of market-driven journalism as applied to the responses of the sample of 29 journalists at nine newspapers throughout Missouri:

> *Market-driven journalism assumes financial considerations, including relationships with advertisers, as a primary determinant of news content in a newspaper.*

In the present study, nine respondents indicated an immediate understanding of the term market-driven journalism. Another 14 respondents said they had never heard the term, but indicated some understanding of it on deeper questioning. Only six respondents had neither heard nor understood the term. Of this latter group, all had job responsibilities at their newspapers that were not solely editorial.

Interpretation of the term varied among the 23 respondents who indicated knowledge and/or understanding of the term. Of these, 21 respondents all offered interpretations of market-driven journalism, noting that the term refers to the importance of the business norm over the journalism norm in making news content decisions. What varies in their interpretation is which component of the business norm – advertisers or audience members – is the most influential component.

For these respondents, the overall relationship between news and economics was the important consideration (Respondent #24, p. 116 for example). In those instances where the respondents address instances of market-driven journalism, both the advertiser and the audience assume greater importance than in the McManus model. These respondents were usually able to assign primacy to the advertiser over the audience, though not in all instances.

When they offered their own real life examples of market-driven journalism,

those examples focused on cases in which concern for a particular advertiser (Respondent #12, p.112, Respondent #1, p. 114 for example) or audience member (Respondent $5, p. 118 for example) could have had an influence on news content decisions. Examples involving advertising's importance dominate the responses.

Respondents also exhibited sometimes highly detailed knowledge about the characteristics of their audience and indicated that knowledge is valuable and necessary in helping maintain the economic health of their publications.

Virtually all 21 respondents indicated that market-driven journalism was a problem in adhering to the public or journalism norm. However, all respondents except one (Respondent #24, p. 116) expressed the firm belief that market-driven journalism was not a serious issue at <u>their</u> newspaper. One respondent (Respondent #8, p. 120) expressed the belief that a newspaper publisher should prefer more advertising to news content; however, that respondent hastened to add that in the respondent's experience, "…it pretty well balances out" (p. 120).

Knowledge of the Audience

The author was impressed with the extent to virtually all respondents knew their audience. This might be expected in communities that are smaller and where contact with the audience members is easier and more frequent. However, this knowledge was more vivid and insightful.

One respondent (Respondent #9) attributes the newspaper's audience as perhaps having less formal education, but being avid readers of print media "…because most of them were brought up on the King James version of the Bible"

(p. 124). Whether this is correct information is open to question, but there were so many similar and vivid audience descriptions (Respondent #26, p. 125; Respondents #13, #17 and #18, p. 127) that the author is certain newspaper staff are responsive to these perceptions in reporting, writing and publishing their respective newspapers.

In summary, a large majority of the respondents knew or had an understanding of the term market-driven journalism. Most interpreted it as the influence of financial, usually advertising, concerns (the business norm) over journalism concerns (the public norm). All believed it was not a serious problem at their newspapers. However, they did believe it could be a problem for journalism as a whole and could be at their newspapers, offering examples where advertisers or audience members could influence news content.

The respondents' interpretation of market-driven journalism was different from the interpretation of the term as explicated by its originator (McManus, 1994), more in line with the definition offered by the author (p. 144) or by marketplace models, such as the one proposed by Beaudoin and Thorson (2001).

All respondents offered vivid descriptions of their audience members. They were often quite accurate in those instances in which the information could be verified by census or demographic data. However, even when these audience descriptions seemed unverifiable, the perception of who was the audience certainly seemed that it could exert a strong influence on the content of the newspaper.

In the Chapter Six, the author presents the interviewees' responses to the question of whether the respondents' newspapers publish content that is an accurate

portrayal of the diversity of their respective audience members.

Chapter Six

Market-Driven Journalism and Audience Diversity

As described in the previous chapter, nine journalists working at the community newspapers that participated in this study had a very sure grasp of the meaning of the term market-driven journalism and its implications for their newspapers and the newspaper industry, and another 14 offered reasonable interpretations of the term upon deeper questioning. This understanding of the implications of market-driven journalism existed among this latter group members who were initially unfamiliar with the term itself.

A more in-depth understanding of market-driven journalism existed in proportion to the position and newspaper experience of the respondents; however, journalists in all positions and at all levels of experience (or inexperience) demonstrated some understanding of the term.

Journalists at community newspapers involved in this study seemed in some instances more concerned about the possible negative effects on the journalism mission of their newspapers than journalists at larger newspapers involved in the authors' previous secondary data analyses of this phenomenon, perhaps because of the inherent economic insecurities of operating a small newspaper.

Does this interpretation of market-driven journalism have implications for diversity for the newspapers involved in this study and for the content of their news?

Diversity in the Community

Diversity in media can take more than one form. There is diversity in the number and variety of media sources available to the public, the "multitude of voices" interpretation of diversity (Rollick, 1994, p. 54). This is particularly true in nations that are small, developing or less able to support multiple media voices (Iosifides, 1999). It is this interpretation of diversity that led to regulation to ensure availability of many voices, particularly in the broadcast media (Hollick, 1994).

More recently and more particularly in American media, diversity has come to refer to the ethnic and cultural characteristics of those who work in the media and consume its product, the audience (Najjar, 995; Clark, 1980). It is this latter interpretation of diversity the author considers in this chapter.

Many of the respondents interviewed for this study offered comments that reflected an interest in this latter interpretation of diversity and, in some instances, how it could affect the bottom line. Their insights were sometimes interestingly different from those of their urban counterparts on this subject.

This may be due in part to the reality that audience changes in the communities participating in this study were not attributable solely to ethnic or cultural diversity. In fact, while that diversity is mentioned by several respondents on several occasions, they are referring to a phenomenon that has had little impact to date since most of the communities involved in this study are largely non-Hispanic and white, their Black populations were negligible and

their perceived increase in Hispanic residents may be a temporary phenomenon attributable to the agriculture and packing industries that employ them.

What did seem real to the author was the knowledge that the respondents had about their audience, both anecdotal and statistical, as well as an understanding that the continued financial well-being of their newspapers was contingent on identifying their present and potential audience and addressing their information needs.

Identifying Audience Diversity

It is a fundamental media marketing principle that an audience must first be identified before media can be addressed to their wants and needs. This seems to be a primary concern to the journalist-respondents in this study. How they are identifying their present and potential audience members differs somewhat from the methods employed at large urban newspapers.

Large newspapers, like the *Los Angeles Times* and its East Coast counterparts, *The New York Times* and *Washington Post*, now support large, sophisticated and costly market research components, either internally or by contract. This is not a viable financial option for newspapers the size of those in this study, though one of the larger newspapers in this study did have future plans to contract audience research.

As demonstrated in the comments of the respondents, the ways in which the community newspaper journalists in this study come to know their audience

are: 1) to live in the community for a long time and come to know its people; and, 2) to get out among their readers, or both.

Journalists in this study demonstrate an understanding of their audience and of the changes in their communities and audience. Still, that understanding is more qualitative: respondents often referred to broad audience characteristics rather than audience numbers or demographic data.

Numbers can be important when the managers of these newspapers make determinations about prospective audience members. However, beyond the quantitative nature of the new audience members, qualitative characteristics are important as well. Many of the communities included in this study are smaller and historically homogenous, as discussed in Chapter Four.

The populations of many of the communities involved in this study are changing, and many are becoming more ethnically diverse. These qualitative changes in the nature of the communities and audience members of the newspapers involved in this study are examined in this chapter.

How aware are the respondents of the changes that are taking place in their communities and of the scale of those changes? How do community newspaper journalists identify diversity? Finally, does the content of their newspapers reflect the nature of their increasingly diverse audiences?

Those issues were the substance of the concerns of this author in posing several questions regarding diversity to all the respondents in this study.

This chapter will focus on the following findings:

1) The respondents' interpretation of what constitutes audience diversity;

2) Real diversity as determined by U.S. and state of Missouri year 2000 Census information regarding the population characteristics in the counties/communities included in this study;

3) The respondents' beliefs regarding whether the diverse members of their audience are represented in the pages of their respective newspapers.

The interviewees' responses to the first question posed above are presented in this chapter. A content analysis of each newspaper included in this study to determine how well each newspaper actually covers its audience is presented in the following chapter along with the appropriate corresponding census data.

When America Was Truly Diverse

We retain from our national heritage the image of a Colonial America in which the majority of the residents were British and other European immigrants who risked all to come to the New World freely, possessing only a desire to gain personal liberty, coming together partially as a united people as the American Revolution neared.

Taylor (2003) contends that this seeming homogeneity is a myth. Rather, claims Taylor, it was in the 17th and 18th centuries that America was truly diverse. In 1790, the new United States had a higher proportion of non-native speakers than it did in 1990. During the 18th century, two million unwilling African-language speaking slaves were imported to America and the West Indies by British settlers and numerous slave traders. These outnumbered free immigrants by a three to one margin. However, the conditions of slavery

resulted in a death rate that far outpaced the birthrate among the slave population and the death rate among the non-slave population. (Taylor, 2003, pp. 96-97).

The majority of slaves imported by British slave traders into the New World in the 17th century were brought to the British West Indies to work on sugar plantations. It was in the 18th century that the slave trade expanded broadly into America, primarily the Carolinas and the Chesapeake states of Maryland and Virginia. Once on the Colonial mainland, "…slave births exceeded slave deaths, enabling that population to grow through natural increase, especially after 1740." (ibid.).

As the mainland black population expanded in the 18th century, reaching an estimated 575,000 by 1780, the population of slaves in the West Indies fell. Taylor estimates that "The British West Indies had only 350,000 slaves in 1780, even though 1.2 million had been brought to the islands over the preceding two centuries." (ibid., p. 97).

At the same time, the emigration from England that had brought 350,000 to America in the 17th century declined to approximately 80,000 from the beginning of the 18th century until 1775. Of these, Taylor estimates a minimum of 50,000 were convicted felons who came to America in indentured servitude. England's increasing economic power during this same time period compelled it to recruit colonists from other European nations: the Scottish Isles, Ireland and Germany chief among them.

> The new recruitment invented America as an asylum from religious persecution and political oppression in Europe. The years

> 1700 to 1775 brought 145,000 Scots – many of whom preserved their Gaelic speech and customs – and 100,000 Germans. These foreigners outnumbered English newcomers 3 to 1. Thomas Paine was not indulging in his usual hyperbole when he declared, 'If there is a country in the world where concord would be least expected, it is America.'" (ibid., 96).

It is reasonable to assume from this co-mingling of peoples and language and cultures that the resulting American 'character' is due at least in part to the necessity of beginning to integrate the different peoples that constituted the immigrant wave of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The true definition of diversity in America by the early 20th century was less concerned with diversity of peoples that already was in existence than it was with a diversity of opinion in the national public discourse. As the population of the nation grew and clustered in the cities of the coasts, homogenization of ideas borne of common heritage and living conditions was a danger and the need for a new kind of market, a "marketplace of ideas" was deemed appropriate.

It was Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes who wrote in a famous dissent that coined the marketplace of ideas phrase "that the ultimate good desired is better reached by free trade in ideas – that the best test of truth is the power of the thought to get itself accepted in the competition of the market."(*Abrams v. United States*, 250 U.S. 616, 630, 1919).

Holmes found philosophical support for the marketplace of ideas concept from Mill's essay "On Liberty," in which the English philosopher pointed out the risks inherent in suppressing ideas:

> But the peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is that it is robbing the human race; posterity as well as the existing generation; those who dissent from the opinion, still more than those who hold it. If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth: if wrong, they lose, what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error. (Mill, in *On Liberty,* 1963).

The body of mass communication law that developed in the United States was naturally concerned with free speech and the marketplace of ideas because these were the bases on which the Republic was founded. The goal of diversity in speech and ideas having been largely achieved by the mid-20th century, diversity then shifted its focus more to the messenger, less to the message.

What Is Diversity?

With such a bifurcated history, it is natural to wonder: what is the nature of diversity? While its dictionary definition is simply "…the condition of being different" (Webster's, 2001, p. 339), its operational definition varies. Is it ensuring a multiplicity of voices or the representation of all America's peoples in the nation's collective voice? Its early meaning was a multiplicity of voices. More recently, it has come to be defined in terms of demographic characteristics such as race, ethnicity and gender.

This was one of the questions posed to the journalists working at the newspapers that participated in this study; specifically: "How do you define diversity?"

Most respondents opted for a definition tailored to their own community and readership, one that was inclusive not only of ethnicity, but also of cultural, economic and religious differences:

Respondent #1, an editor, defined it initially in broad, traditional terms, and then noted changes in the ethnic composition of the community:

> I would think diversity would include not only your basic demographic factors of age, sex, ethnic groups, socio-economic backgrounds, as well as race. I tailored that definition to this vicinity. This is, in many ways, a homogenous type of place historically. Now, that's been altered somewhat with the Hispanic audience, but I cannot expect having the Hispanic audience reading my newspaper.

But, when asked to provide an example of how diversity functions in the community, this respondent was able to provide a more layered and complex, but distinctly small community, description when referring to historical geographic and religious diversity in the community:

> [Town A] has a long reputation of being a very pugnacious place. It has some diversity. In fact, up through The Sixties, there was a real conflict between the public school and the Catholic school. The Catholics wouldn't support the public school's tax referendums and the public school wouldn't do anything for the Catholics in return. There was just a long, ancient tradition over there.
>
> [Town B], six miles south, is probably the most insulated community. A woman who grew up there was criticized by a teacher for hanging out with a Catholic girl, "a good Baptist girl like you doesn't do that." People there have been really offended by the Hispanics because they have a lot of Hispanic people moving into the school district and the town itself, and they don't know what to do with them. But, you know, a lot of this stuff will change with the young people….

Religion, as noted above, was often mentioned, unprompted, when respondents were queried about diversity. Respondent #3 viewed diversity in broad terms that included religion:

> It's more than racial diversity, more than superficial characteristics. It's even religion sometimes. [Here] There are different types of religions. For instance, there is a primitive

> Baptist Church, which is a kind of Baptist Church that doesn't believe in missions. It's really strange. I have never heard of it anywhere else and I went to a Baptist college. I've never heard of primitive Baptist, but it's something that we have dealt with here before. There is some sort of openness here towards religion and religious diversity.

Respondent #7 defined diversity in a similar manner, noting: "We had a large influx of Mormons in earlier years. Now, there is an influx of Amish. They've been really great additions to the community."

Respondent #9 also perceived diversity as having more of a religious than racial dimension:

> Our community is hugely diverse. Now it is not diverse across racial lines. So I would say that racial and age diversity is virtually non-existent. When I moved here, there were seven Baptist churches. Now there is a Christian church, and we probably have four or five other denominations, but all of them tend to be mainline Protestant.
>
> We had a few Catholic families and one or two Jewish families living here, but this is primarily a white Protestant constituency and that holds pretty much true for the whole county.

Respondent #27 defined diversity in terms of the regional economy:

> I look at diversity in terms of socio-economic groups. (This town), for example, is basically a blue-collar town. It's relatively poor with a significant affluent class of people in it.
>
> We have a rural audience that is very interested in the farming issues we haven't covered in the past and a city-interest group that's maybe at the upper socio-economic level. So, there are three diverse groups.

Others defined diversity in terms of historic immigration patterns, like Respondent #13:

> This is a very tight-knit community, a lot of people of Dutch or German descent who moved over here and settled and stayed. What little racial diversity we get comes from a couple of our major employers like [a well-known Fortune 500 corporation] and the two hospitals. They bring in a nice, diversified group, but we don't have enough of that.

Some respondents spoke of diversity in terms of the growing "big city" influence on a rural way of life. Respondent #20 equated diversity with "growth" and noted problems:

> People coming from other areas bring their own things with them and it changes everything. So it is like growth. People moved from big cities to these small towns. That is where you start noticing it first…in the way they bring their big city ideals down to our little city. Things like crime, and stuff that wasn't here before. Maybe drugs.

Respondent #24, a journalist, spoke of diversity in a similar manner:

> Our community is changing. Ten years ago changes began…we went from 90 percent agricultural and rural to more people from the city moving here because it was quiet and there was some artistic value and some historic value. Now we are getting a lot more Hispanics because of the different businesses that we have here.
>
> There is still a lingering tension between city folk and rural folk, but they are basically on the same side now against a common outsider.
> We have a large growing Hispanic community that is basically broken down to Salvadorans and Mexicans. Some Salvadorans showed up and I think they started telling the families that this is a good place to come and a good place to live. I think we've had probably a 10 percent increase in the last five years.

These above two responses are typical of the responses that might be anticipated from residents of communities terms "out there" by Clay (1994, pp. 174-175).

Others, like Respondent #5, a publisher, identified the changes in their community's ethnic composition in terms of regional business dynamics:

> At first blush, I would think our population is fairly homogenous, but it's changing, specifically with the great number of Hispanics headed in this direction. Around us…not necessarily (in this town), but within 20 or 30 miles, there's a whole bunch of poultry industry plants, both turkey and chickens. A lot of their workers are Hispanic workers coming in from Mexico. In fact, in the last year, I've had my first few ads that were in Spanish.

While many of the definitions of diversity were noted in terms of regional, small (community) characteristics, others were more aware and inclusive of prevailing definitions:

> Diversity? It is a variety of people who have different lifestyles. The obvious one is the different colored skin…different ethnic origin, different interests. I think we have [that kind of] diversity because of the university. We have the diversity of an intellectual community and trades people.

However, the same respondent returned to the class theme mentioned by others:

> I think diversity here is more socio-economic than a lot of other determining factors. We have very wealthy people in this town. It surprises me sometimes to learn how much wealth has been amassed by some of the people, who have not led lives that you would assume would have led to accumulating enormous wealth.

This respondent also noted the presence of diversity in terms of sexual preference, the only interviewee to make such an observation:

> We have a large gay community. It is not very prominent. This is a fairly tolerant community as long as you do not make an issue of being gay. And it became kind of a haven here.

> Three or four years ago, we had a person who was very active in working with AIDS in this area. This person got a lot of support from business and individuals…financially and in other ways, too.

One Person as a Bridge between the Audience and the Editor

When they addressed the issue of diversity, respondents commonly linked the prominence of a particular type of diverse community with a single individual who was significant in serving as a bridge between the diverse community and the larger, historically homogenous group. These individuals often helped expand the newspaper coverage of the activities of specific groups in some communities. In some instances, that individual's bridge was cultural or linguistic; in others, it was religious in nature, consisting of an affiliation with a particular church. It was a personal, not simply professional, relationship in all cases.

For example, Respondent #1, an editor, gives this account of how he and his reporting staff obtained information about events that occur in the community's growing Hispanic population. The account explains both how extensive are this editor's attempt to integrate coverage of the Hispanic community into coverage in the local newspaper, and how frustrating and scattershot that attempt can become:

> There were two missionaries that were brought in by the local Methodist church to do outreach with Hispanic community. There is no one that I can contact to say 'What does the Hispanic community think?' There was someone who was Anglo, who helped in that regard. Then she married a guy from Bolivia and they took off to South America to do missionary work. So I lost those folks.

> Then, the county prosecutor hired the wife of the pastor of the Cornerstone Pentecostal church who worked up at the migrant center as a victims' rights advocate. She and her husband ran a sort of bilingual service. So they can help.
>
> Other option I have if I really need to know something…the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education developed a body of workers who handle migrant students in different quadrants. The activity in this part of the state became so significant that the headquarters for the state's entire migrant student program is now here. So, if I need to know something, I can call up and speak with the head of that agency.
>
> I don't have people that I can talk to who are out in the community. I can call the [a local family identified by surname]. They are Hispanic missionaries. He goes to school fulltime and his wife has been hired by the school district to work in their ESL program.
>
> [Because of them] we even tried publishing a portion of the newspaper in Spanish for some time. But they really had no sense of deadlines for providing information. And consequently we could never deliver consistently for advertisers who wanted to know what was going on. We finally gave up [on the Spanish language edition] because we just couldn't make a go of it.
>
> Since then, we've attempted to do some things. Now, my main contacts I have are a couple of agencies that have come together and developed a multicultural center for the county which operates on Fridays out of the county health department. There's a lady there on staff who organizes activities. She sends me information ads we actually print up the schedule in English and Spanish.

In all, 11 of the respondents told similar anecdotes relating attempts to integrate coverage of the locally growing Hispanic community into their newspaper's coverage. In all instances, the ongoing problem was that no Spanish-speaking person was available on the newspaper staff to establish and maintain contact with the Hispanic community. In all instances, editors and publishers identified this problem, but noted that they did not have the financial resources available to hire Spanish-speaking reporters.

It was interesting to note the prominent role of various churches and individuals affiliated with those churches in serving as a bridge between the newspaper and the Hispanic community. Some respondents mentioned that their newspaper's knowledge about the Hispanic community and events of interest to that community were sometimes facilitated through the efforts of bilingual individuals associated with churches.

Quite possibly, this relationship could be exploited on a more organized and ongoing manner by newspapers that are experiencing growth in their Hispanic audience. This would provide more thorough coverage of all components of newspaper audiences in the affected communities while providing these small newspapers another, possibly significant, stream of advertising and subscription revenue.

The author will return to this question in the final chapter.

Addressing the Needs of a Changing Audience

It is clear that the newspaper audience is changing nationwide (Clark, 1980; Bogart, 1992; Lichty, 1992) as well as in a number of the communities that are home to newspapers included in this study (Belsie, 2001),. The greatest perceived change was identified by respondents in the present study as the growth of the Hispanic population, and observation that has support on the national level (Albacete, 2001; www.census.gov).

Respondents in this study were uncommonly attuned to anecdotally identifying the changes in their audience demographics. Beyond this, they were

asked how good a job their respective newspaper was doing in covering the news in these changing audience segments, particularly among Hispanic audience members. Specifically, this question was put to each of the respondents: "Do you feel you do a fair job of covering that portion of your community that you consider to be diverse?"

Interviewees often had a response similar to that of Respondent #1: "There is a major problem reaching the Hispanic portion of our audience." As might be expected, the lack of Spanish-speaking editorial staff members was often cited as the leading cause of the problem in reaching the Hispanic audience.

Respondent #4, an editor, placed the response to this question in a larger historical context:

> Initially this area was settled by Irish, German, the usual mix up if you can call it that. Then after Vietnam, we started having some Oriental folks come in. Not many, but some. That continued at a fairly even level, but it wasn't an on-rush.
> Then when _____ opened its complex west of here…how long ago now, five years, four years…there was a sudden total on-rush of Hispanics that this community was completely unprepared for. There was nothing here to support these folks. Being an immigrant myself and not speaking the language when I came to this city…there had to be some kind of support in order for these folks to survive here. _____ wasn't taking an interest. They weren't doing anything initially. They just bought them in by the busload, housing them in a dilapidated trailer park they threw up there.

This, says Respondent #4, was a situation that the community effectively sought to address, but the local media did not:

> …all of a sudden, you have got all these people here, and nobody knows what the hell to do with them. Well, [this community] is unusual. In a study that was conducted by the University of Alabama, they found that this community compared to several others in the state had more organizations interested in supporting or being created to support situations of this kind. That's what has

> happened. Sadly, none of the. media here, as far as I can see, have caught up with that. We have covered things that these local organizations have done to help the Hispanics. We cannot…at least I haven't been able to… get close to the Hispanics. I can't get there.

When asked if the problem is geographic, Respondent #4 cites the problem as being one of insufficient resources:

> No, it's not geography or access. The [citing the competing newspaper in an adjacent county] on the other hand has the money to be able to pay folks to do columns. That is good. I wish I could do that, but I can't afford it.

The insufficient resources can be the lack of available funds to hire Spanish-speaking editorial staff. However, Respondent #4, as did other respondents, did cite lack of acceptance of the new residents by the community's "historic" residents as being another reason for the lack of media coverage, echoeing Clay's comment (1994, 174-175) about the tension that can sometimes exist between older and newer residents in a small community, as well as the comments of Respondent #24 (p. 155): the new residents are not being readily accepted as part of the community by the newspaper's established audience members:

> Neither one of the papers has printed articles in Spanish. They (again citing the competing newspaper) probably could a lot easier than we could. One of the radio stations here has done that: two weeks ago when we had a tornado alert, they aired one spot in Spanish letting people know there was a tornado possibility. That was the only time. Besides, the Hispanics are beginning to be not accepted. People are beginning to shrug them off, saying: 'OK, they are here and there is nothing we can do about it.'"

Respondent #4 does not attribute this lack of acceptance by the community as a form of racism or cultural polarization:

> Lesser known, there are at least two or three Lithuanian groups living in the northeastern section of the county and the northwestern section of the county. There is no contact with those people at all.
>
> I don't know anything about them. I have asked several of the local agencies like the County Community Partnership. They deal with this type of thing almost exclusively. They have all sorts of little sub-organizations over there to help people. I have asked them get me a contact. I would like to talk to these people. Get me a name, get me a telephone number. Nothing comes out of that. I don't know if that is because whoever this spokesman for these people doesn't want to do that, or if they can't find out. I don't know.
>
> But it is disturbing to me that we have these segments of town that seem to be unapproachable unless and until they run into trouble with the law.

The respondent cited a typical example of what was termed by that respondent as "Whoops, they did something wrong" coverage:

> A typical example is a murder that took place. The [citing the competing newspaper] shows the headline for that by using the word Hispanic: 'Hispanic Youth Killed.'
>
> Well, goddammit! When we had two {naming a nearby town]teenagers killed in a car wreck, they are just as dead as a 15-year-old Hispanic boy is, they didn't say German Americans. So why do that? But the Hispanics see that, and they see it as a downer. And I don't understand why they would do that.
>
> It is not necessary for me, and you will notice in my story that I don't refer to either one of those people as Hispanic. If you can't figure out from their names that they are Hispanic, chances are you don't have any business holding a newspaper.

While eschewing what was termed "sensationalist" coverage, this editor nonetheless admitted that it would be the lead story in the next week's edition of the newspaper because "It is still a major story that happened, and the guy is still at large and he is dangerous as hell."

Still, this is not the kind of story or type of coverage this editor prefers to

have of the local immigrant community. This respondent feels employers have a responsibility to help integrate their new hires with their new community:

> What could be done? I would say the first obligation lies with the employer to have those people become more accessible. [Citing the local poultry plant by name] could tell those people: 'Look, we need to get you acquainted with this town.'
>
> Then they could come to me and say, 'Hey, we have this real interesting guy out here.' They get me out there and I do a story and a photo. Little-by-little, we get those people involved.

One reason that was cited by this respondent as a deterrent to this kind of "retail" journalism is the belief that many of the employees of the local poultry processing plant are known by the plant operators to be illegal alien workers and the employer feared coverage would call attention to this fact. Respondent #4 claimed the Federal Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) estimates that, following an INS "sweep" of the poultry plant, "50 to 60 percent of the folks working at (the plant name) are illegal."

Respondent #5, a publisher whose newspaper is located in another part of the state from Respondent #4's newspaper, cites the financial pressures of putting out a weekly newspaper with a thin staff as being the primary reason why coverage of changing and diverse communities is less than desirable:

> I think we are not doing a terribly good job of [covering diverse communities], but we are making a swipe at it every now and then. We have done absolutely nothing to benefit or to market to people who are coming in to us by the immigrant groups. We don't do a particularly good job of marketing ourselves to anybody.

For this publisher/respondent, the problem of addressing both the editorial and economic health of the community newspaper has been made more difficult by the absorption of family-owned newspapers by corporate chains with more

bottom-line concerns:

> I have been fairly lucky. I don't think that is the conflict at this newspaper. I think the conflict, the 'Evil Empire,' comes from corporate pressures of the dying independent and the rise of the chain. You know when we have a guy who's living here and makes his life here and intends to make his life here as the head of the thing and this is not the lower advertiser where all answers for the lower advertiser are given, it becomes profit center number one.
>
> As profit center number 27 in a chain, that results in piss-poor journalism. You have a budget, instead of a staff, you have a good enough product instead of the best product that you can put out.

In similar fashion, Respondent #4 notes that the decline of the independently owned newspaper and the rise in corporatization has had a negative effect on the overall quality of journalism at community newspapers, not just coverage of new and/or diverse audiences. The respondent refers again to a nearby competing newspaper:

> When that was a family-owned paper, those people cared about their town, they really cared about it. When things went bad here, the paper was all over that.
>
> As one example, we had a police chief here, and the suspicion of corruption existed for years and no one touched it. And the editor at that time was a product of the *Kansas City Star*. Been here for 10 years, something like that. Met with me one day because that was my beat, and we had a long discussion about it. We agreed that this was an area that needed to be looked into. And we did. The long and the short of the whole thing is that there came about two public meetings…huge public meetings. There wasn't an empty seat in the municipal building. The end result was that the Chief was forced out which had never happened before. And at that time, the Chief was elected. It had never happened before. Not only was the Chief ousted, but the city instituted a merit system whereby the Chief was appointed.

> We did the same sort of stories with [new] public housing and with housing in general especially with regard to certain specific localities in town. Areas that were worse than others. We pointed those out.
>
> The paper was hard hitting. Some people said mean. But it wasn't meanness. It was pointing out what the problem was, hoping to achieve a resolution. The paper followed through, put its neck on the line editorially. It took a lot of guts to do that. Reporters were shot at, including me, because people were pissed. But that is what the paper did. Now you don't find that. They will cover the gore, blood, crime, the stuff people don't really need to hear about.

While other editorial workers echoed this concern for the perceived greater importance of the bottom-line among chain and group rather than family-owned newspapers, respondents did not tie the importance of this brand of market-driven journalism to poor coverage of changing and diverse audiences in their communities. In some instances, the pooled resources available to newspaper chains and groups were cited as a potential aid to broader, better coverage of diverse audiences in the community.

Respondent #22, the publisher of one paper that was the lead paper in a nationwide chain of regionally clustered newspapers, suggested in a manner similar to that of journalists at the *Los Angeles Times*, bigger can be better. A chain or group of newspapers can serve a purpose roughly equivalent to baseball's minor leagues:

> We don't have much of a minority presence in our staffs…by that, I mean our newsrooms.
>
> Part of the solution to that problem might be a re-evaluation of our career track – embracing the idea of sending them off to St. Louis or Kansas City – understanding that we can be a training ground. Maybe that leads to a higher caliber reporter in two or three years.
>
> They can go on then, work for the Gannetts. We become a feeder newspaper. We develop the editorial management, whether it is on

the Internet or tech side. We become known for our training.

What if beginning reporters start work covering diverse populations for community newspapers that are part of a chain or group with the expectation that they will be nurtured, that they will leave and move on to more responsible positions at larger newspapers, perhaps ones that are owned by the group?

This is an interesting idea, one that the author explores further in the concluding chapter.

Not all respondents feel they are doing a poor job of covering their changing audience. Respondent #20, a reporter, cited specific examples of the newspaper's attempt to incorporate coverage of the activities of its Hispanic audience in the newspaper:

> We have done stories about the Hispanic population. Not just about them, but about the things that they are doing in the community. They created their own organization – *Union de Fuerza* – 'in unity strength' I think is how it translates. One of their founders moved away and she was kind of a driving force behind it.
>
> When they first started meeting, *I went to their first meeting, and unfortunately it was conducted entirely in Spanish. I only speak a very little Spanish and I speak very slowly* [author's italics]. I didn't understand, I could get the gist of what was going on but not the full thing. We stopped covering the meetings in person, but would talk to some of the leaders after and find out what it was that they were... they were going for advocacy of Hispanic issues, and then they had a multi-cultural forum here in March talking about the issues that were going to be of importance.
>
> It wasn't like they had come about because of problems that had happened, as is the case with a lot of forums. It was kind of a proactive stance that the city took in realizing that things would have to be done to avoid potential problems. So, they talked about English as second language classes, classes for adults and that sort of thing. Basically to just make sure everybody can get along I guess. We covered that.

> I know we covered agricultural stories, a drought story. Last harvest season, it was really raining and I had to do a story on compaction. I didn't know a thing about it, but I did when I was done.

Again, there seems to be no reluctance on the part of this – and in fact virtually all – respondents to cover issues of relevance to their diverse audience members. There does, however, seem to be great difficulty summoning the resources to effectively cover such stories, particularly linguistic resources.

The Unique Diversity of Small Communities

Diversity in America has meant diversity as both a multitude of media voices and, more recently, as how well those voices represent the ethnic, racial and gender characteristics of those voices, particularly of those who craft media messages.

Such a definition of diversity may be less appropriate in small communities. It certainly seemed limiting in considering diversity as it existed in the communities participating in this study.

The most obviously under-considered characteristic of diversity among the respondents and in the communities participating in this study was religious beliefs.

Until this point, the author has discussed church and state in a metaphorical sense, as a reference to the journalism or "public" norm and the "business" norms discussed by McManus (1994). But the metaphor is also real, referring to (in the ideal circumstance) America's historical separation of secular and religious concerns.

If religious affiliation is so prominent an element of life in the

communities involved in this study, perhaps it would be legitimate for editors at newspapers in the appropriate communities to seek to do a thorough job of covering news of interest to members of varying religions.

Assigning a reporter to a religion beat has in fact become a consideration at larger metro newspapers in communities where religion is an important component of the community's identity. It could be seen as ignoring the public interest not to cover activities of the LDS (Mormon) community in Salt Lake City as it would be to ignore the Roman Catholic community in Rome.

Several of the respondents also noted a "growing" population of Hispanics among their audience members (the extent to which this population is actually growing is taken up in the next chapter). No respondent assigned an accurate census percentage or estimate of this growth. However, the comment was so prevalent that the author deems the perception alone to have merit.

Few of the newspapers involved in this study have the resources to conduct audience surveys and, while census data is available, there is no assurance that those who craft the newspapers in this survey will rely on it to make news content decisions. Therefore, perception of the nature of the "growing" Hispanic community may, in the near term or future, come to affect how the newspapers involved in this study define their audience and cover the news.

This observation relates particularly to two comments offered by several of the respondents:

1) the reliance on individuals affiliated with local churches or social

service agencies to serve as unofficial reporters because of their Spanish language ability; and,

2) the lack of resources (or desire?) to hire staff with Spanish language ability.

The author contends there are instances in which adding a Spanish voice to some of the newspapers involved in this study could be beneficial to the editorial and financial health of these newspapers, if for no other reason that that there was an perceived need for this skill articulated by several respondents.

This question is considered further in the concluding chapter of this study.

The following chapter seeks to tie together the threads of diversity discussed in this chapter. The respondents have identified what it is they perceive as being diversity among the audience members in their respective communities. How well does that perception express itself in the actual content of their newspapers? The answer to that question for the newspapers involved in this study is presented in Chapter Seven.

Chapter Seven

The Content Analysis

The author completed a content analysis of each of the newspapers participating in this study to determine to whether editorial staff perceptions of how well each newspaper covers its respective diverse audiences conforms with the reality of that coverage in the pages of the newspapers.

The content analysis material was gathered by the author at the time of the author's visit to each participating newspaper and followed the author's interview with each participating staff member to ensure the interviews would not be affected by impressions gained during the content analysis. The analysis was performed subsequent to each set of interviews in all cases.

The method followed for the content analysis of each newspaper is one method explicated by Krippendorf (2004). Content analysis, as defined by Krippendorf, "…is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context" (Krippendorf, 2004, p. 21).

A systematic sample of each newspaper was obtained. Within that systematic sample, clusters of stories in various categories were identified with a particular focus on stories related to diversity (Krippendorf, pp. 67-68). The results of content analysis can be expressed either quantitatively or qualitatively. Inferences are then drawn from analysis of this data (Krippendorf, p. 27). Because of the relatively small numbers in the relevant story categories, the results obtained for this study are explicated qualitatively rather than being presented in quantitative tabular form,

though the nominal responses are presented as well.

For this study, the author used this technique to make inferences about the possible differences between journalists' perceptions of how well their newspaper covered its community and how well the newspaper actually covered the community in terms of the number of certain kinds of stories that were published.

The analysis for each newspaper was completed, and is presented, individually by newspaper in alphabetical order:

1) *Aurora Advertiser*, Aurora, MO
2) *Boone County Journal*, Ashland, MO
3) *The Central Missouri News*, Sedalia, MO *The*
4) *The Hannibal Courier-Post*, Hannibal, MO
5) *Lawrence County Record,* Mt. Vernon, MO
6) *The Marshall Democrat-News*, Marshall, MO
7) *The Milan Standard*, Milan, MO
8) *The Monett Times*, Monett, MO
9) *Southeast Missourian*, Cape Girardeau, MO

The analysis includes pertinent comments from editorial staff members at each newspaper. These comments identify the respondents by a numbering system devised by the author to ensure confidentiality.

In addition to the content analysis for each newspaper, the following presentation also includes census information for the Missouri County in which the newspaper is published and circulated. The information is taken from the official U.S. Census Bureau information for the year 2000, the most recent national and state decalogic census. That

information became available in full in 2002.

The census information can be most conveniently found at: www.uscensusbureau.gov, which also provides links to each state and selected categories.

***The Aurora Advertiser* (weekly), Aurora, MO, Lawrence County**

The Aurora Advertiser is a second Lawrence county newspaper included in this study, the other being the weekly *Lawrence County Record,* discussed later in this chapter. Both have a similar circulation area, and both had a similar paid circulation at the time of this study: 3,382 for *The Aurora Advertiser* and 3,648 for the *Lawrence County Record.* Though listed as a "weekly," *The Aurora Advertiser* is actually published Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

Missouri experienced a 9.3 percent increase in population from 1990 to 2000; however, Lawrence county's population growth was near double that of the state at 16.4 percent. Among the year 2000 population, 95.7 percent (N=33,690) were residents identifying themselves as "White-Caucasian," which exceeds the state percentage of 84.9 percent, a total in excess of 4.8 million.

While the state's percentage of residents identifying themselves as "Black or African American" stands at 11.2 percent, it is a negligible .3 percent in Lawrence county.

The county's growth has been among those persons identifying themselves as "White-Caucasian" and among persons of "Latino or Hispanic origin." In Lawrence county, 3.4 percent of the population (N=1,225) identified themselves in this latter category, while only 2.1 percent does for the state.

Both county newspapers are confronting the same market pressure and demographic changes. However, editorial staff at the *Lawrence County Record* seemed more concerned about the effects of demographics on their publication than did those at *The Aurora Advertiser*. Put another way, market-driven journalism in terms of concern for advertisers is more of a stated force at *The Aurora Advertiser.* At the *Lawrence County Record*, there seemed to be more concern for the consumers (audience).

The Aurora Advertiser seems to operate on a different business model, one that stresses, as its name suggests, advertising:

> The audience is simple and straightforward. It's our readers, the people who live here, generally defined by the trade territory.

Referring to the "competing" *Lawrence County Record,* the same staff member acknowledged the overlap in circulation areas, but said*:* "We don't sell papers to their readership and they don't sell papers to ours."

In part, this different business model and the ability of both newspapers to survive and thrive with the same population base is attributable to a curious feature of the county's changing demographics: the city of Aurora is not experiencing the same impact from the influx of Hispanic residents as is Mt. Vernon (where the *Lawrence County Record* is published) and Monett (in adjoining Barry county, where *The Monett Times* is published):

> At first blush, the community would seem fairly homogenous, but it is changing, specifically with the great number of Hispanics headed in this direction…*around us…not necessarily in Aurora* [author's italics]. Within 20 or 30 miles, there's a whole bunch of poultry industry plants, both turkey and chickens. A lot of their workers are Hispanic workers coming in from Mexico. In the last year, I've had my first few ads in Spanish.

Issues of *The Aurora Advertiser* that were analyzed included January issues in the years 1990 (five), 1995 (six) and 2000 (five).

The paper does not have a fixed page count and issue lengths for 1990 ranged from a low of six pages to a high of 16, exclusive of advertising inserts. The year's issues included a regular compilation of crime and court activity. Page one articles for this year also included two above-the-fold articles on local crimes and a third on a "suspicious" shooting that was ruled self-inflicted.

Absent were any stories on local growth or development. Articles from press releases and local events such as Chamber of Commerce meetings were prominent. The notable feature was each issue's volume of advertising, far greater than the anticipated 60 percent editorial to 40 percent advertising budget.

Notable, too, was the fact that every issue (in all years) carried several letters-to-the-editor, an important feature according to editorial staff members.

The nature of the content of *The Aurora Advertiser* changed somewhat in 1995. There was a typographical redesign of headlines and the addition of a feature, the syndicated Ann Landers column. Again, issue length ranged from six to 16 pages exclusive of advertising supplements.

Coverage of crime was again prominent, in fact increased. The crime and court activity feature remained. The crime report was now called "Police Beat." There were four prominent local crime stories, stories on

local Chamber of Commerce activities, and stories on the local economic and tax collection climate (improving).

The newspaper was of similar length and the stories of similar content in the year 2000 issues examined. There was an addition to the court activity feature ("Associate Court") which, when added to the already existing features on "Circuit Court" and "Police Beat" results in three-quarters to nearly a full page on crime activity in each issue, exclusive of news stories.

There was not a single explicit story related to the area's diverse communities in any of the issues analyzed for any of the three years.

As with other respondents in this study, an editorial executive at *The Aurora Advertiser* cited the newspaper's small staff. The same executive also offered the observation that the newspaper's coverage of the area's changing demographic reality was more reactive than proactive, and more concerned with marketing than with news coverage:

> I think that we are not doing a terribly good job of that, but we are taking a swipe at it every now and then. We have done absolutely nothing to market to people who are coming into us by the groups. I think we don't do a particularly good job of marketing ourselves to anyone.

Financial concerns were more clearly in evidence at *The Aurora Advertiser.* It may be that the ownership of the newspaper feels less of an obligation to publish a hard news newspaper because of the proximity of *The Lawrence County Record*. Or, it may be that the ownership's intent is simply to operate a profitable business that happens to be a newspaper.

This is intended as a factual observation, not a pejorative one.

The Aurora Advertiser certainly appears to operate on a model intended to appeal to an audience that is almost exclusively "White-Caucasian" in a county with an almost non-existent (.3 percent) African-American population.

The relative prevalence of stories related to crime could be taken to mean that the editor and publisher seek to use the "if it bleeds, it leads" approach with its rural, possibly conservative White-Caucasian audience, and thereby appeal to advertisers.

If this is the case, the approach seems to be effective since this newspaper was, as the author notes above, notable for the prominence of its advertising hole. The author's definition of market-driven journalism: the use of financial considerations, including relationships with advertisers, as a primary determinant of news content (see this study p. 58) may be a significant force at *The Aurora Advertiser.*

That said, however, it should also be noted that editorial personnel at this newspaper were quite knowledgeable about the issue of market-driven journalism in the newspaper business and that their interview comments indicated opposition to its use at their newspaper.

This dissonance between statements in opposition to market-driven journalism and its seeming presence in their newspaper may reflect a short-term need to bolster the financial position of the newspaper rather than an editorial philosophy.

The *Boone County Journal* (weekly), Ashland, MO, Boone County

Boone County could appropriately be named Boom County.

In the period from 1990 to the year 2000, the county's population swelled 20.5 percent – more than double the statewide rate of 9.3 percent – to 135,454 according to the Year 2000 U.S. Census. The county's median income of $37,485 was only slightly lower than the statewide median income of $37,934. The $107,400 median value of owner-occupied housing was nearly 25 percent higher than the statewide median of $89,900.

The real lure of Boone County during this period may well be the fact that it was the only county in the United States during this period of national prosperity that actually had negative unemployment, more jobs than the available workforce had jobseekers.

Boone County was particularly attractive to those seeking work in education and those whose jobs required higher education. The percentage of Boone county residents in over the age of 25 who had earned a bachelor's degree or higher was 41.7 percent according to year 2000 Census data. This does not account for younger residents with degrees. The statewide percentage of degree holders was 21.6 percent (www.census.gov.).

Boone county is more diverse in terms of ethnicity than are the other Missouri counties that are home to the newspapers involved in this study. The proportion of persons identifying themselves as "Black or African American" in the year 2000 Census was 8.5 percent (N=11,500) of the county's 135,454 total

population, somewhat under the State's 11.2 percent total. Nearly three times as many persons identifying themselves as "Asian" reside in Boone county, 3.3 percent (N=4,470) versus 1.1 percent (N=1,490) statewide. These ethnically diverse populations, though they are small, are concentrated in the city of Columbia and in southern Boone county.

The *Boone County Journal* is based in Ashland, 15 miles south of Columbia, home of the 25,000-plus student main campus of the University of Missouri. The paper has a long history, starting in 1877 as *The Ashland Bugle,* which ceased publication in 1951. The *Journal* replaced that newspaper in 1969, started by a graduate of the University of Missouri School of Journalism. The newspaper changed ownership in 1986 and again in 2000. Its paid circulation in 2000 was 1,775 (MPA, 2000).

Ashland itself is a rural community. Old Highway 63 runs through the town, aiding access and helping the few downtown businesses prosper. Once driving to nearby Columbia and the state capital in Jefferson City was made easier by a modern highway, Ashland's downtown prosperity diminished and the community's size decreased.

Nearby Columbia is served by two daily newspapers, the *Columbia Daily Tribune* and the School of Journalism's-affiliated *Columbia Missourian*.

While the editorial staff members of the *Boone County Journal* recognize the influence of nearby Columbia, the newspaper staff members do not see the paper as being in direct competition for the same readership as either of the two Columbia newspapers. Its readership is in many demographic respects different from that of

the rest of the growing county, said newspaper staff members, in that its readership is older, rural and more religious.

The *Boone County Journal* also has another audience as a consequence of the county's explosive growth:

> There is a second group. Since the 1970s, the city has been growing relatively rapidly and very rapidly in the last 10 years. We are the fastest growing community in this state. And the beautiful land around here…just river hills and beautiful land. It was available here at a pretty good price. That's not true any longer.
>
> So we have folks who are professional people who work in Columbia and Jefferson City. This is a totally different group.
>
> And we have a third group: artists, people who want to get back to the land, ecologists, people who raise goats and spin the fine hair into thread and make products from it. They are turning this into a much hipper place.
>
> We have a readership over a thousand north of here and into Columbia. So, what we attempt to do both for that group and for the rural folks is to cover county news.

As the reader might expect from this audience description, the staff of the *Boone County Journal* perceive the newspaper as having a very diverse readership that was identified even in terms of religious affiliation:

> It is hugely diverse. Now it is not diverse along racial lines. The Black population is in the southern part of the county, something like 36 per there. Here, it is very small. But it's religiously diverse. There were seven Baptist Churches in 1970. Now, there's a Catholic church, maybe four or five other denominations, mostly mainstream Protestant. Ours is primarily a white Protestant constituency.

This manner of identifying the newspaper's audience was used by other editorial staff members :

> Yes. Here it's more than racial diversity. There are different types of religions. There's a sort of openness towards religion here.

While staff members acknowledge the existence of diverse audiences – even if not in exclusively ethnic terms – staff members have mixed feelings about the nature of their coverage of that diversity:

> I think we try. But there are only four people in the office. Only one of us lives in Ashland and that person doesn't work fulltime here. What I am able to cover is what I hear. And you only hear so much. As a reporter, I know there is a class of people who just don't talk to reporters, and that class gets left out.

When asked if there was contentment with the paper's coverage of its readership's diversity, one executive of the newspaper had a more positive view:

> I am [content with our coverage of diversity]. We actively pursue it. We look for things that are different and interesting. There are wonderful people living here with wonderful stories to tell, and we would not be doing our job if we were not looking out for those stories. All sorts of people with different viewpoints and whole lives that are built around things that maybe I don't know anything about.

The same editorial staff member stressed the paper's attempts at enterprise reporting:

> We do a feature story every week that is really our outlet for this kind of reporting. We go out and find a source. It can be anything. We have done things at the University about breast cancer research. This week, we are working on a story about teenage firefighters here, about the special rules and regulations that allow them to do this, so that when the fire bells go off, they are allowed to leave school, about how they are going to school to learn to be better fire fighters. And these kids are 17 and 18 years old. It's a great story.

This somewhat alternative editorial view of diversity is clearly communicated in the content of the newspaper.

Issues of the *Boone County Journal* were sampled for the years 1995 (12) and 1999 (12). Issues were not available for earlier years. Weekly issues from 1995 were randomly sampled from the months of January (one), March (three), April (two), June (two), August (two), October (one) and November (one). Issues ran 14

pages in length, exclusive of advertising inserts. The editorial/advertising mix was approximately 60/40. There was no use of color in the copy or photographs...

The thrust of the coverage in all featured articles was county growth (11 stories), county government (six stories) and crime (three stories). One editorial staff member commented that the newspaper does not publish a regular crime report as did other newspapers involved in this study "…because nothing much happens here and we don't do stories on speeding tickets and investigations."

The *Boone County Journal* published several regular columns in addition to two full op-ed pages: "Notes from Breakfast Creek," "From the Middle of Somewhere," and "A Boone County Hiking Journal." During this period, the newspaper also ran a monthly feature, "Senior Scene" and occasional holiday inserts (an eight-page Thanksgiving history/recipe insert).

These columns and features seem to give the newspaper more of a collective sense of a singular editorial voice in contrast with other newspapers involved in this study.

There was, however, no featured story that could be termed about diversity in the demographic sense. In keeping with the comments of editorial staff, there was a church directory page and two stories that could have been deemed as being about religious subjects.

Issues for 1999 were sampled from January (two), February (three), April (one), June (two), July (one), November (two) and December (one). These issues ran between 10 and 14 pages and contained a similar editorial/advertising mix, though there appeared to be a greater amount of editorial material in some issues.

The newspaper was now two-color.

The rapid growth that was taking place in Boone county at this time was apparent in the pages of the *Boone County Journal.* Stories related to that growth were the bulk of featured stories (20), two full pages (including maps) of a proposed municipal annexation plan and four editorials, two on regulating growth and two on the local controversy concerning annexation. There were three stories on crime. The columns that appeared in the 1995 issues continued to run in 1999.

Among these 1999 issues were three featured stories related to diversity interests, a feature on Martin Luther King and two personality profiles.

The *Boone County Journal*, in the words of one editorial staff member, "…is not trying to change the world." Rather, the newspaper seems to have an editorial sense of diversity that consists largely of chronicling what one editorial executive referred to as "…the ruralization of urban folks."

It seeks to accomplish this goal with news content that is focused on growth and growth issues [such as proposals for annexation], personality features on the individuals who are new residents to the area and columns and personal commentary that lend a recognizable voice to the paper.

The *Boone County Journal* is among the smallest newspapers involved in this study in terms of circulation and has changed ownership several times. This may indicate that it is difficult for the newspaper's owners to make a go of the paper as a business.

Notwithstanding possible financial difficulties, the content of the *Boone County Journal* reflects an editorial philosophy that makes community news

preeminent. The *Boone County Journal* showed evidence of doing a fine job covering local growth in an area where growth and how that growth is managed is a major, perhaps the major, story.

The newspaper staff indicated that "…the ruralization of urban folks" was also a significant theme in the newspaper's coverage area and the content of the issues examined also reflected concern for this theme on the part of editorial staff.

Profiles of local residents, particularly those whose life reflected the ruralization theme (a professor who was a part-time pumpkin farmer, for example) bolstered the sense on the part of this reader that the newspaper's staff saw the role of the paper as being one that chronicles significant community events and trends rather than attempting to influence them.

Also notable was the presence of local residents in the ongoing columns that are a regular feature of the *Boone County Journal*. Editorial staff members indicated that the newspaper was committed to providing these regular columns to the newspaper's readers as a way of chronicling the life of the community in the words of its residents, not as a way of simply filling space (the newspaper has a very small staff) or attracting advertisers.

In every respect, the *Boone County Journal* demonstrated an apparent commitment to editorial over financial (including advertiser) concerns.

While the newspaper's content reflected the preeminent position of editorial content, this did seem to be limited to the themes of growth and the return to rural life among city residents. While the absolute numbers of ethnically diverse populations were small in its coverage area and concentrated in nearby Columbia,

that diversity is greater in Boone county and the area that is partially inclusive of the newspaper's coverage area than it is in most other communities involved in this study. Yet, there were no articles in the issues examined by the author that reflected this fact. It seems that the newspaper could do a better job of covering its nearby diverse communities.

That the *Boone County Journal* is somewhat lacking in this respect may be a matter of intent since the newspaper covers those themes the editorial staff sees as being of greatest concern to its audience. However, this lack of coverage could reflect a lack of resources, particularly reporters (there were only two on staff at the time of this study).

It might well serve the newspaper's financial circumstances better and be more attractive to certain advertisers if the newspaper could do a better job of covering those audience members belonging to ethnic populations the numbers of which are likely to rise in the future in the coverage area of the *Boone County Journal*.

***The Central Missouri News* (weekly), Sedalia, MO, Pettis County**

The Central Missouri News, located in Sedalia in southeast Pettis county, is unusual among the newspapers involved in this study because it is a weekly newspaper the staff of which perceives that "our direct competition is the *Sedalia Democrat*," the same city's daily newspaper.

The Central Missouri News publishes on Wednesday and circulated to a paid subscription base of 4,455 readers in 2000 (MPA, 2000).

The *Sedalia Democrat* is circulated to 12,766 subscribers on weekdays, publishes a Sunday edition that is circulated to 14,172 and publishes a free Wednesday edition that reaches 5,834 and competes directly on the same publication day as *The Central Missouri News* (MPA, 2000).

While this would seem to be an unfair competition, several factors create a more favorable competitive environment for *The Central Missouri News* than might be expected.

Pettis county is growing and Sedalia is the county seat. The county grew 11.2 percent, gaining 4,412 new residents, from 1990 to 2000. This rate of growth exceeds the statewide rate of growth by more than two percent. Median household income was $31,800 in the year 2000, lower than the statewide median of $37,934 but relatively healthy for a rural county. Median home values are 11 percent higher in Pettis county than in Saline county, which adjoins Pettis county to the north, though median incomes are similar (www.census.gov).

Pettis county's population mix is somewhat different with that of Saline county. A lower proportion of residents identified themselves as "Black or African American" during the year 2000 census, 3 percent versus 5.4 percent. Pettis county has a slightly lower proportion of Hispanic residents, 3.9 percent (N=1,542) versus Saline county's 4.4 percent (N=1,012) (www.census.gov). Again, this portion of the population is growing rapidly in response to a rising demand for workers at a newly opened (in 2000) a chicken processing plant five miles west of Sedalia.

The big difference then between the two neighboring counties is growth in Pettis county and the potential new subscriber and advertiser base that should

accompany that growth. Saline county is losing population.

For *The Central Missouri News*, part of leveling the playing field with its wealthier daily competitor is exploiting the changing economic climate of Pettis county. One reporter explained it this way:

> Advertising pays for the space of your newspaper. You have to cater to the people who do advertise in your newspaper. So, there is a certain amount of catering to the people who advertise in our newspaper, and I think rightly so.
>
> We do an extremely big job of covering Tyson. We have done a lot of features on them. We even devote a full special section to them at different times of the year.
>
> A similar point of view was expressed by one of the paper's editorial executives:
>
> The unfortunate thing is that advertising is what keeps the lights on. When the publisher says 'This guy just opened a new business,' we've got to do something for him. I can console myself by saying 'Yeah, this guy just opened a business, and it's legit news' but, at the same time we are doing it so that we can get his advertising dollar.
>
> There are other times when that rationale doesn't exist and we still have to do it. That's just the way it is. Especially on a small newspaper like this one. We are fighting tooth and nail for every advertising dollar we can get because the daily can offer so much more.
>
> [The daily can offer] Immediacy for one thing, color for another, graphics for another. For example, they do everything with a digital camera. Shoot into the computer and that is it. Not us. We can't do that. We can't afford it. So we are fighting day in and day out for every ad buck we can get.

Indeed, the staff at *The Central Missouri News* perceives itself in what amounts to an old-fashioned newspaper war such as might exist between metro morning and evening newspapers. According to the same executive:

> They hate us. Honest to God. For one thing, we are keeping them honest from an advertising point of view. If we need to, we can undercut them. By the same token, so can they. They can afford it

> better because they are run by a corporation not based here. Out in California. They've got revenue they can fall back on that we don't have. They've got staff they can fall back on that we don't have: we've got two part-time and one fulltime.
>
> But still, we beat them on news often as not. [We] develop or cover a story they don't do. 'We're too busy' is often the excuse they give. And people still turn to the daily first, which irritates the shit out of me!

All editorial staff members perceived the paper as doing a good job of covering diversity in their community, with one reporter's interpretation of "diversity" being "…a fair representation of all the groups that make up the community or the county." Another reporter termed the newspaper's job of covering diversity "incredible for the size of our staff."

Issues published earlier than 1999 were not available for sampling at the time of the author's visit to the offices of *The Central Missouri News.* Instead issues were randomly sampled from 1999 (12, one for one week of each month) and the year 2000 (one issue for one week in January, March April, June).

All issues analyzed ran between 18 and 22 pages in two sections: a section "A" consisting of featured news stories and a section "B" leading with up to four pages of sports, a full page photo feature, classified ads and an occasional feature ranging from a personality profile to a book review. Section "B" advertising was higher than that of section "A" and often for sports-related businesses. Each issue contained a full op-ed page, a full-page church directory and a page of crime, court and public notices that ran up to a full page. All issues were two-color.

Local news and profiles dominated section "A." Page one was often reported and written completely by one editorial staff member. The section "B" sports were

often similarly reported and written by one staff member. In some instances, wire service stories supplemented the reporting in both sections.

Among the issues analyzed, sports seemed the dominant theme, generally consisting of four full pages of coverage. A personal profile, published below the fold and running approximately one-third page, ran in six issues.

Despite the editorial staff comments regarding the newspaper's propensity to publish "favorable" stories about local businesses, such stories appeared in only two issues. More common was coverage – four stories in all – about local charities ("The Dream Factory" and "United Way," for example) and local events, about which seven stories appeared.

There were six stories in all concerning local crime, exclusive of the crime and court report page. In terms of the coverage of local minorities, there were two stories including one personality profile. Coverage of minorities in section "B" sports coverage and the photo spread page was occasional and seemed inclusive.

Much of the coverage in *The Central Missouri News*, particularly its extensive local sports coverage, may be intended to differentiate the newspaper from its larger, daily competitor. Often the coverage seemed intended to appeal to a local audience drawn to the city and county's "seamier" side. One editorial staff member described the newspaper's coverage in this manner:

> My audience is just about everybody: people who have a real morbid curiosity about people who are in trouble, people getting divorces, people who have been arrested, stuff like that.
>
> And then, sports. We're well-know in this town for sports. Everybody reads our sports. They consider it the better part of our newspaper.

While this may be a reality of small town newspaper publishing, no other editorial employee of any other newspaper in this study admitted to having more interest in gossip and sports than in news.

Another interpretation could be that *The Central Missouri News* has opted for what some might consider a downscale strategy owing to its competition with the larger *Sedalia Democrat.*

In either case, it is notable that this journalist, and perhaps the newspaper, seems to have less regard for the local audience desire to be offered "hard" news.

This is the only newspaper involved in this study at which any editorial personnel indicated that the audience consisted of people who had "morbid curiosity" about the troubling life events of others or that "You have to cater to the people who do advertise in your newspaper."

These comments, and the stated prominence of sports coverage in *The Central Missouri News,* suggest to the author that these are tactics designed to enable the newspaper to more successfully compete with the larger *Sedalia Democrat.*

Despite the comment about catering to advertisers, there was little evidence of that in terms of the content of the issues examined by the author. There were only two instances of such "favorable" coverage.

More noteworthy was the amount of sports coverage and the volume of related advertising that was intermingled with sports coverage. This may indeed be a result of financial incentives or, again, simply a means of

differentiating the newspaper from its local competitor.

In sum, one could say that the staff of *The Central Missouri News* believes the newspaper is more motivated by market-driven concerns, as defined by this author, than is demonstrated in the newspaper's content.

***The Hannibal Courier-Post* (daily, including weekends), Hannibal, MO, Marion County**

Hannibal may be the most history-laden town in Missouri. It was the actual birthplace and home of Mark Twain, chief among America's humorists and journalists, creator of its homespun literary riverboat mythologies.

The *Hannibal Courier-Post* is Missouri's oldest newspaper, now in its 166th year. Both the town of Hannibal and the newspaper show the pride and weight of its legacy. The newspaper depicts that legacy in its rotogravure masthead, an oval with a riverboat and the words, "Missouri's Oldest Newspaper." That legacy is reflected on the newspaper's front page, which daily bears an image of Mark Twain with a popular quotation in a feature entitled "Twain Speaks."

Like its riverside rival to the south in Cape Girardeau, *The Southeast Missourian,* the *Hannibal Courier-Post* is a reminder of the history of the city of Hannibal, the Mississippi River and of the State of Missouri.

Its daily paid circulation in 2000 was 19,503 (MPA, 2000). Like *The Southeast Missourian,* the form of the *Hannibal Courier-Post* closely resembles that of an urban metro newspaper. It offers a multiple number of sections, extensive use of color printing and photography on page one, and editorial and advertising inserts. The

newspaper also gives the reader a clear sense of the place where it is published.

As with Cape Girardeau county, the other Mississippi River county involved in this study, Marion county is a clear reflection of life along the Mississippi River. The city's economic history has been bound with manufacturing and river transport. Its population change as recorded in the year 2000 census was an increase of 2.2 percent, approximately 618 individuals, only one-fourth of the percentage of the statewide population increase. The population identifying itself as predominantly "White or Caucasian" in the year 2000 census, was somewhat higher at 93.3 percent than the "White or Caucasian" population statewide (84.9 percent), but lower than that of the central Missouri counties discussed earlier (www.census.gov).

This is attributable to the fact that the county's Hispanic population, in contrast with those central Missouri counties, is a relatively negligible .9 percent – approximately 250 residents – far fewer than central Missouri counties not located adjacent to the Mississippi River, and its historic manufacturing industry base.

Also like Cape Girardeau county, Marion county has a larger population identifying itself as "Black or African American" in the year 2000 census, 4.6 percent, approximately 1,300 residents of its total 28,080 population. This county, too, bears a legacy of a proportion of slave ownership in the 19th century higher than other counties having newspapers involved in this study. For some, "Ol' Man River" means something more than just the title of a song from a popular piece of musical theatre.

As discussed in Chapter Four, the economic changes in Hannibal may be having more impact on the newspaper and its news coverage than the city's demographic changes:

> In Hannibal, I see a blue-collar audience. I see a blue-collar audience that works at factories, that may go to the bar on Friday night and go down and play darts, and then may go bowling and watch a lot of TV. And they hunt. Maybe a little bit Redneck.
>
> Primarily in Hannibal, we have older people. We have lots of demographics that show we are older. A lot of the people are not necessarily well-educated. A lot of them are retirees from the local shoe factories, like in Massachusetts.
>
> The factories are gone now. So the people that are here, that we are writing to, what I hear over and over again from coffee shop drinkers is that they are very untrusting. They think it's a conspiracy. Everything is 'they say.'
>
> In the middle of that, we have these wonderful Arts Council and Chamber of Commerce people. They're nurses, nurse-practitioners, teachers, community leaders. They're educators…they have their Doctor's degrees, they have their Master's degrees. So, in the middle are these wonderful accomplished people who are just out there doing what they do every day without attracting too much attention to themselves.
>
> But the ones I hear from…here, at the newspaper…are the blue-collar workers.

It may be an accurate reflection of the newspaper's *readership*. However, this "blue-collar" older identity is not an accurate reflection of the city's *population* as reported in the year 2000 census.

The year 2000 census describes a population that is only 16.6 percent over the age of 65 and 25.7 percent under the age of 18, 6.8 percent of which is under the age of five. This suggests a city population of married families with young school-age children.

The percentage of the female population is slightly higher than male at 52.8 percent, only slightly lower than the proportion of residents who reported living together in the same house, 54.2 percent. Hannibal residents in 2000 earned 85

percent, $31,774, of the statewide median income of $37, 934.

Also, the proportion of Hannibal residents with an earned Bachelor's degree or higher was 15.6 percent, this in contrast with the statewide percentage of 21.6 percent, and somewhat lower in terms of achievement than suggested by the editorial executive's remarks above.

In other words, the readership audience of the newspaper, as perceived by at least one highly placed editorial executive, is different from the county population, the newspaper's potential readership as described in the year 2000 census.

Still, the *Hannibal Courier-Post* appears to have been attempting to represent its audience in the broadest sense in the issues analyzed since 1995.

Issues of the *Hannibal Courier-Post* were sampled and analyzed for one day each week during 1995 and 1999. Issues published from January to mid-June, 2000 were not available. Four issues published near the time of the author's late June visit, June 15-18, were made available.

This included one weekend edition, analyzed only to determine and differences from the weekday publication. Issues were not available at all for 1990.

Weekend editions were not among the 1995 sample since they were not available for all newspapers involved in this study that published a weekend editions. It was also possible that weekend editions, consisting of more pages, would be more likely to contain stories published to fill available space and not run as a matter of editorial choice.

In the 1995 issues (13), page length in section A varied from 10 pages to 22 pages. There were a total of 12 featured stories with content that would be of

interest and favorably depicted diverse populations. These ranged from a January 5 page two pullout section on Martin Luther King in celebration of the annual holiday to an entertainment feature on Asian American television personality Connie Chung.

Other stories included a 30-year anniversary story from Associated Press on the bombing of a Black church in Selma, Alabama; a profile of a local 87-year-old Black businessman; a story on the city's "awareness" for the disabled; and a one-year AP retrospective story on the genocide in Rwanda. The newspaper also published one editorial (April 3) championing diversity.

Also included throughout the issues analyzed was extensive coverage of the ongoing murder trial of O.J. Simpson. This may be viewed more appropriately as a crime story; however, coverage of the trial appeared prominently only in the *Hannibal Courier-Post* and *The Southeast Missourian*. This may be due to the fact that these newspapers regularly published stories of interest to a readership that may not always be exclusively local.

The content of the stories published in the *Hannibal Courier-Post*, those related to diversity aside, included extensive coverage of local issues. The newspaper's standard features, "Twain's Words" aside, included features one might find in many large metro newspapers: weather, crime and court reports, extensive local and regional sports, comics, and Ann Landers among them. Page one published a daily box containing local news briefs.

The *Hannibal Courier-Post* does not have reporters who cover international news. Instead, Associated Press wire stories were also a regular feature, particularly

for national news of interest (like the Simpson trial) and international news such as Rwanda and the U.S. marine landing in Somalia.

There were prominently featured stories on local business ("Local business family to bring Comfort Inn to Hannibal"), state legislative activity (series on upcoming legislative session), and agriculture ("Hog farming sparks zoning debate in rural areas") published in virtually every issue examined.

The overall impression of the 1995 newspaper issues examined is of a newspaper that attempts to offer its readership an attractively produced package with a full complement of standard features, extensive local news and international news in the form of AP wire stories for the interested portion of its readership.

Year 1999 issues examined (12) contained fewer featured stories on diversity related themes, only six. This may be related in some instances to the issue dates: for example, the January 1 issues randomly selected was published too early in the month for Martin Luther King retrospective articles. In that issue, however, was a profile of a local Black community leader who works with local youth.

The newspaper published three editorials, all favorable. One, ("Ignoring our differences") published September 20, was timed to run with a page one feature story on the local NAACP chapter's annual banquet.

Issues analyzed from 1999 did have a noticeable increase in the number of featured stories on local crime, but these were actual news stories ("Manhunt on for three escapees," "Police seek killer of former Perry woman") that seemed published to cover genuine news events of local interest.

Among the four issues from 2000 that were sampled was one

Saturday/Sunday edition (June 17-18).

The newspapers published on these dates were virtually identical in design and content from those of 1995 and 1999. One issue (June 19) featured a page one profile of a visiting gospel singer accompanied by a photograph at a local performance. Another (June 15) published a page one feature on the local Juneteenth celebration, which recognizes the abolition of slavery.

The weekend edition differed from the daily editions only in its more extensive use of AP wire service stories. This may be attributable to a reduced number of editorial staff available on Fridays and Saturdays during summer.

The author's analysis and impressions of the *Hannibal Courier-Post* seem to support the stated goal of a highly placed executive of the newspaper:

> I see our audience changing some. It has been basically the older, more affluent segment of the market, particularly in the Hannibal area. I am trying to expand that coverage to include not only a younger audience, which I think every newspaper in the country is trying to do in one way or another, but also to be a more meaningful and compelling product to people outside of town.
>
> We are starting to be a regional source of news and information for northeast Missouri. So, we're looking at not only trying to attract a younger audience but also a more diverse one that is outside of Hannibal.

When asked specifically about the paper's diversity coverage, the same respondent adds:

> I look at diversity in terms of socio-economic groups. Hannibal is basically a blue-collar town, relatively poor with a significant affluent class of people. I'm trying to grow this newspaper among those who don't currently and consistently read it. That would be blue-collar and lower socio-economic groups.

Or, as one editor said:

> The most common kind of diversity is ethnic. But there is also economic status, even educational status. I think we do a pretty good job of representing the diversity in Hannibal.

As the author observed, the newspaper seems to have attempted to offer coverage of its diverse communities as early as 1995.

However, content in the *Hannibal Courier-Post* over time seems to support some editorial employees' observation that the important stories in this city are those that explore its changing economy and the effects of those changes.

A shift in economic fortunes and more difficult economic times have resulted in coverage that seems to regard diversity in economic terms. Perhaps because of this editorial stance, there seems to be less coverage concerning ethnic diversity over time.

The *Hannibal Courier-Post* seems designed to appeal to more than one audience: an older, affluent group interested in the rich history of the city and an older audience that prospered during the city's manufacturing heyday, but has come upon harder economic times.

Editorial employees understand ethnicity as being one component of diversity. However, for the time being, diversity coverage here seems to underscore the socioeconomic diversity resulting from an economic shift that has left some residents affluent and others concerned about their economic futures.

The Lawrence County Record, **(weekly), Mt. Vernon, MO, Lawrence County**

The Lawrence County Record is the second Lawrence county newspaper to be included in this study, the other being *The Aurora Advertiser*, discussed earlier in

this chapter.

The editorial staff of *The Lawrence County Record* indicates an awareness of the changes taking place in their community and acknowledges that those changes are not yet reflected in the pages of their newspaper. One editorial staff member observed:

> This is a community that is on the verge of change. We have already started it. We are on the edge of getting ready to take off and we have to make sure everything is in order so that the community can take off and grow without suffering a lot of the pains other communities have when they have grown too fast. We have had a lot of people move in and it is important for the newspaper to help them become a part of the community.

The same staffer noted that "There are a lot of people coming in from California."

This is an anecdotal observation that could not be validated except by obtaining confidential information from the State Department of Motor Vehicles identifying drivers who exchange a license from other states, California in this case, for a Missouri license. Even this would be suspect since not everyone moving to the state would necessarily have a driver's license or exchange it until required by law. The remark does, however, refer to a possibly significant perception.

The reader is reminded that the State of Missouri experienced a 9.3 percent increase in population from 1990 to 2000; however, Lawrence county's population growth was near double that of the state at 16.4 percent. Among the year 2000 population, 95.7 percent (N=33,690) were residents identifying themselves as "White-Caucasian," exceeding the state percentage of 84.9 percent, more than 4.8 million people.

The state's percentage of residents identifying themselves as "Black or African American" stands at 11.2 percent; however, it is a negligible .3 percent in Lawrence county.

The county's growth has been among those identifying themselves as "White-Caucasian" and among persons of "Latino or Hispanic origin." In Lawrence county, 3.4 percent of the population (N=1,225) identified themselves in this latter category, while only 2.1 percent does for the State (www.census.gov).

The editorial staff sees these changes – new Caucasian residents from outside Missouri and a higher than statewide increase in the county's Hispanic population – as having an effect on their newspaper's role. Commenting on that role, the same editorial staff member said:

> I see the newspaper's role as taking these diverse people – the ones moving in and the ones who have been here for a long time and are concerned about change – take this wide variety of people in this community and give them a sense of community and an identity of their past and their future. To help pull them together as a community that is going to survive the change and still be a good, strong community, a good place to raise your kids, even a good place to retire.
>
> We are a community of imperfect people, but we are good people. I think it is important to see that in the different segments of the community, and it is good to show that in the newspaper.

While it may be "good" to show diversity in the pages of the newspaper, the coverage of issues and events related to Lawrence county's diverse populations was less than might be expected or desirable given that population's growth in the weekly issues of *The Lawrence County Record* were examined for each of the first three months, January, February and March, for the years 1990, 1995 and 2000. This constituted a total sample of 13 issues for each of the three years, or 39 issues

total.

The 1990 issues consisted of 14 pages, a food insert, a television insert and a retail advertising section.

In all of these 1990 issues, there were only two stories related to members of a minority community, one a (favorable) story about a local resident named Missouri "Journalism Student of the Year," the second a profile of a Hispanic physician newly arrived at the local hospital. Neither was a page one story.

During the same period, there were six page one stories about local crime, and a full page three story about the increase in local crime in the area. There were also two regular features, "Crime Watch," essentially a summary of local arrests, and "Court Watch," a summary of county court cases and decisions.

A similar pattern was evident in the year 1995 issues of the paper. The paper was of the same length with the same section and feature content. There were no stories related to minority members of the community, but two full pages of stories related to local crime and a continuation of the two previously noted crime features, "Crime Watch," and "Court Watch."

A change was evident in issues of *The Lawrence County Record* for the year 2000. Paid circulation for that year was 3,648 (MPA, 2000)

The newspaper had undergone redesign and an expansion. Issues were no longer a standard 14 pages, but varied in length from 12 to 20 pages. There were now occasional sections on agriculture ("Agriculture Today"), and an increase in the number of stories related to business including three page one feature stories.

Crime stories continued to be prevalent. There were two page one crime

stories, including one that concerned a missing Hispanic woman in which "foul play" was suspected.

The crime coverage did not appear to be related to the growth in the local minority population. There was also "favorable" coverage of minorities, including a full page story on "Black History Month" on page 10, a page one story on a child from Siberia adopted by a local couple and a page one personality profile of a newly arrived man from New Zealand.

These, along with an increase in coverage of local business, including an occasional section entitled "Business" demonstrate that the newspaper staff seemed to be making an effort to provide interesting, newsworthy content concerning its diverse audience members.

Still lacking, however, was coverage of issues and events related to the county's Hispanic community, which all editorial staff members claimed was growing... Again, this may be more related to difficulties with language than any intentional bias on the part of the newspaper's staff. As another editorial staff member said:

> Before too long, we'll probably be forced into running some public notices and things like that in Spanish.
>
> It's just…it's kind of scary because of having to type the unusual words and having to proof them. You know that if you spell a word wrong it can take on a whole different meaning. If we spell a word wrong in English, you can tell what it's going to be from the context. Maybe you can do the same thing in Spanish. But some of their words are so similar and have totally different meanings. You could really insult someone by spelling a word wrong sometimes.

The author reminds the reader that *The Lawrence County Record* also failed to cover events in the Black community. It should be noted, however, that only .3

percent of the residents of Lawrence county – approximately 110 residents – identified themselves as "Black or African American" in the census. Lack of coverage of the Hispanic community seems more pressing an issue since 3.4 percent (a 16.5 percent increase from 1990) or approximately 1,225 residents identified themselves as Hispanic during the year 2000 census.

If editorial staff members at *The Lawrence County Record* saw their audience as largely white and rural, it could be asserted that the newspaper content reflects a reasonable attempt to represent its audience. Further, it does not appear to be market-driven in terms of the author's definition: the prominence of financial and advertiser concerns over editorial concerns.

However, editorial staff members repeatedly commented on growth in the local population ("We have had a lot of people move in….") and alluded to growth in the Hispanic community ("…we'll probably be forced into running some public notices and things like that in Spanish.").

The former theme seemed to be adequately covered in the newspaper with stories on the growth of local businesses and occasional profiles of new residents.

However, the growth of the Hispanic population, 3.4 percent in Lawrence county as compared with 2.1 percent statewide (www.census.gov) is a significant story that does not seem to be adequately covered by this newspaper. Granted that the growth of this segment of the population has proceeded from a small base, it is still a potentially significant audience of 1,225 for a newspaper the circulation of which is only 3,648, or 32 percent. Why not cover this audience?

One reason may be the tension that exists between longtime community

residents and newcomers, particularly in the case of those whose language and culture are different. Recall the comment of one editorial employee who said the newspaper will "…probably be *forced* [author's italics] into running some public notices…."

Note also that crime features ("Crime Watch," "Court Watch") and crime stories were more prevalent that would normally be the case for a newspaper of this size and circulation. This could suggest a belief among editorial staff that newcomers, particularly those with different language and culture, bring increased crime.

The author is concerned with this phenomenon of not including potential audience members in news coverage, since it seems to be occurring at several of the newspapers involved in this study. There are two reasons for this concern:

1) Small newspapers that have a difficult time attracting new readers and advertisers are overlooking a prospective source for both; and,

2) News coverage at these newspapers may not be as representative of the audience as it is believed to be among editorial staff members.

If these reasons are accurate, this betokens an editorial stance that is not driven by the needs of the local marketplace and calls into question the future financial health of the newspapers where it is practiced. The author will return to this theme and offer recommendations in the concluding chapter.

***Marshall Democrat-News* (daily), Marshall, MO, Saline County**

Marshall, Missouri is located in the center of Saline county, which borders the Missouri River near the center of the state. In addition to being a significant producer of corn and soybeans, it is home to food processing plants that produce pork products and process frozen foods. Its agriculture-based economy and demographic profile is similar to that of Pettis, Barry and Lawrence Counties. *The Marshall Democrat-News* had paid circulation of 3,987 (MPA, 2000) and faces similar issues in reaching its changing audience.

In contrast with most Missouri counties, Saline county incurred a 3.1 percent loss, approximately 710 residents, in its overall population from 1990 to 2000, as reported in the year 2000 census (www.census.gov).

Its "Black or African American" population at 5.4 (N=1,242) percent was only half of the statewide total of 11.2 percent. However, that percentage is higher than that of most rural Missouri counties since the majority of Missouri's Black population is concentrated in the urban areas near St. Louis and Kansas City. This may be attributable to the fact that there were significant slave holdings in the county during the 19th century and many freed slaves settled in the county following emancipation.

Saline county's Hispanic population was 4.4 percent in the 2000 census (1,012) and it is growing rapidly, fueled by the local food processing industry's demand for workers.

These population trends have not gone unnoticed by the editorial leadership and staffers at the newspaper. Still, similar problems in covering the changing

community are as apparent at the *Marshall Democrat-News* as at other newspapers involved in this study:

> I would like our newspaper to be a voice for some of the people, some of the ethnic minorities in town, to see them involved as readers and as contributors of story ideas.
>
> The Hispanic population is really growing here in town. So is the African American population. A lot of it is employers. We have _____ and _____ [food processing plants]. Pettis and Saline Counties are closely related as far as demographics.
>
> So, a lot of things that affect them affect us, too.
>
> Because there is a growing Hispanic community, the school has seen a lot of English as a Second Language [ESL] students coming through. So, we now have a kind of multi-lingual thing going on. I would like us to stay away from being just the newspaper of the white upper class long-time residents. I want to be more than that.

This respondent expressed the belief that *The Marshall Democrat-News* was doing a "better job than before" of representing its minority communities.

> If you went back five or 10 years ago, almost every picture you would have seen then would have been white. I would imagine most of the people, news sources, would have been white. Just luck of the draw. We don't have a lot of diversity on the staff. And a lot of that is just who applies and who is willing to work at a small town newspaper [author's italics].
>
> But we are trying to cover NAACP events. There was a recent controversy earlier this year [2000] with the NAACP finding out about some racial slurs that were uttered by a school employee, leading to the employee resigning. We try to cover those things. There is not a lot of controversy here, which I guess is a good thing.

Here too, however, language issues seem to separate the paper and a significant portion of its readership: "A lot of the Hispanic community…with the different language…it is hard to make their newspaper relevant."

Not all editorial employees agree that the paper is doing a better job covering minority, particularly Hispanic, audience members:

> It's really untraceable, because it's event driven. We covered *Cinco de Mayo*, but there is no reporter assigned to the Hispanic community beat. We tend to have beats based on communities: Marshall, Slater, Sweet Springs, Multi-Bend, whatever, Then, aside from that, they are broken down into human services, government, school, that type of thing. So to add another beat to the Hispanic community, I don't know how we would cover that.

Issues of *The Marshall Democrat-News* examined were from the first two weeks in January for the years 1995 and 1999. Issues from 1990 were not kept and the year 2000 issues had been sent to a bindery for permanent inclusion in bound volumes.

The issues each contained between 10 and 14 pages, exclusive of advertising supplements. As with other newspapers examined in this study, crime stories and local business stories figured prominently in the coverage. Business stories were generally run on page one.

Among the 10 issues from 1995 that were analyzed, there was a total of four crime stories, with one running on page one and the other three on interior pages. Like other newspapers in this study, crime committed by juveniles was the common theme.

Stories related to local business and growth totaled four; with two of those stories running on page one above the fold.

The Marshall Democrat-News was running stories related to its minority communities in 1995. The newspaper ran a page three profile of a local Hispanic student who achieved the Dean's list in college and the same issue ran an

Associated Press wire service story on Martin Luther King Day.

In a later issue, the paper ran a page one profile of an Arab physician. Coverage in the paper during issues from 1999 was similar. There was one less story related to crime and two more related to local business.

It is notable, once again, that no stories appeared in Spanish despite the growing number of county residents for whom that would be the primary language.

The author does find it interesting that the local population is increasingly Hispanic and Spanish-speaking, that the newspaper's editorial staff is aware of this but the newspaper chooses not to cover the Hispanic community – nor the Black community for that matter, 5.4 percent of county residents at 1,242 residents – as a distinct beat.

The former may be related to the language barrier noted at other newspapers in evolved in this study, or the nature of what constitutes a "beat." It may instead be indicative of tension between long time residents and the new residents. As one staff member notes: "There is still that lingering tension between folks coming from the city and rural folks."

Education may be a factor as well. Only one percent of Saline county residents have even attended college. As one reporter said: "Issues are different for the rural folks. You can't write *The New York Times* in Marshall."

The author does not wish to overly stress the importance of the differences between established and newer residents in this community as a factor governing the coverage of new residents. However, this theme is so apparent and persistent – and stated so often by editorial staff of the newspapers involved in this study – that

it cannot be ignored.

We have, in this instance, a case in which there is an older, established (albeit relatively small) Black community and a newer, growing Hispanic community. Both of these audiences (whose absolute numbers are similar) receive little coverage.

In the former instance, there is little acknowledgement of the presence or size of this audience and a corresponding lack of coverage in the newspaper. In the case of the Hispanic population, there is acknowledgement that it is growing, but a corresponding acknowledgement that it receives little coverage.

As the author notes above, there were recent stories on non-White residents of the community: a total of three were published in the 1995 issues examined. Again, this seems to the author to neglect a potentially growing audience segment (Hispanics) as well as a historically neglected one (African Americans).

The author is reluctant to refer to this absence of stories about the community's diverse populations as a result of racism, particularly since the lack of coverage of the Hispanic community and the need for that coverage was so often noted by respondents. This may be an instance, yet again, in which reluctance in welcoming newcomers, language problems or the lack of editorial resources to cover the Hispanic community is an important factor.

The absence of coverage of the African American community is a different matter. This community is significant in size, though only half the proportion of the African American population statewide. It is well-established particularly if, as was suggested by the county's history, this population's

forebears settled the county during the post-Civil War Reconstruction Period.

The reasons for the lack of coverage of this community may well lie beyond the scope of this study. However, this population is a potentially significant audience. As such, the author believes the *Marshall Democrat-News* forfeits a potentially significant source of readership and advertising by failing to adequately cover this community.

Editorial staff members at the newspaper did not comment extensively on the paper's relations with advertisers or about financial concerns. Nor did the content suggest that the newspaper staff was excessively concerned with financial matters over editorial content. The striking feature in this case was the acknowledged (and seemingly willing) failure to adequately cover 9.8 percent of the county's population (the combined proportion of the Black and Hispanic populations), an editorial failure in its own right as well as a prescription for future financial shortcomings.

***The Milan Standard* (weekly), Milan, MO, Sullivan County**

Milan is located in the center of Sullivan county, one county removed from the state of Iowa and the northernmost Missouri county with a newspaper involved in the study.

Sullivan county was the least populous county involved in this study with a Year 2000 population of only 7,219 (MPA, 2000). However, that represented a population increase of 14.1 percent from 1990 to 2000, exceeding the state population growth rate of 9.3 percent during the same period (www.census.gov).

Though the county's population is small, it is relatively prosperous. At the time of this study, its unemployment rate was only 2.2 percent.

In the Year 2000 census, 95 percent of the residents identified themselves as "White or Caucasian," and a minuscule .1 percent (approximately 8 residents) as "Black or African American." The rate of growth can be accounted for by an exploding – relative to the population's size – rate of growth in the Hispanic population, which accounts for 8.8 percent of the county's population, approximately 635 individuals (www.census.gov).

As in other Missouri Counties, this rate of growth can be attributed directly to the county's agricultural base. Sullivan county is a large statewide producer of livestock, primarily beef cattle, and both beef and pork processing plants are operated here. The beef plant once recruited only locally, but has tripled its work force since 1995. The Hispanic population has grown in response to this expansion in the need for workers. Local officials believe that the incoming workers were "…from El Paso, Texas and across the border."

The Milan Standard has a rich history. The paper has been published for 132 years. The present incarnation actually incorporates five newspapers: *The Milan Standard, The Milan Republican, The Browning Leader-Record and the Green City Press,* and had a paid circulation of 4,004 (MPA, 2000).

The editor of *The Milan Standard* has more than 45 years experience as a newspaperman, the most of any individual involved in this study. That editor remains actively involved in the production of the weekly newspaper. In fact, the author's initial interview with the editor was interrupted when the editor had to

leave and take photographs of a small building fire in downtown Milan.

In each issue, small community news predominates. Much of the front page news was the kind of meeting news – school and water boards, local government councils and the like – often relegated to the interior pages of similar newspapers, but important in the everyday functioning of small-town life. Since many stories are taken from the minutes of local meetings and from press releases – several had been published in the issues analyzed. One unique aspect of the newspaper is that it does not run bylines.

Though small community news dominates, editorial staff members of the newspaper have noticed distinct changes in the nature of the community, brought about some feel, by the new residents:

> We're a very rural community and we've had a lot of Hispanic people move in to work at the [beef processing] plant, which wasn't heard of before. I think we've made them feel welcome, I hope so. You used to know every name in town and you no longer know that. Just a couple of years have made a lot of difference in names, in family names.

Issues of the newspaper analyzed for this study were taken from January through June of the years 1995 and 1999. The newspaper, housed in a very small downtown office space, did not retain its issues from 1990, and year 2000 issues were being bound and were not available.

The newspaper does not have a prescribed length. All 1995 issues ran between 20 and 28 pages, exclusive of two regular advertising inserts, one for a local grocery store, the other for a retail outlet.

Unlike other newspapers involved in this study, there was no discernible favorite type of story. One page one issue from 1995 carried a story on local

construction bonds, the next a feature on the President's State of the Union address, a third a story about vandalism in the local school.

The newspaper suffers from some limitation in its ability to cover news because of its small staff size, half of whom are unpaid. As one staffer with editorial and advertising responsibilities noted when asked about coverage of the town's Hispanic population: "We cater to any type of need, any business. Actually, the paper is more about 'You bring it to us and we're glad to get it.' But we don't have a lot of staff, we don't have anyone who goes out to get it. As far as going out to look for stories and news, we can't do that."

While the 1995 issues examined did present useful news of local interest and information about upcoming local events, 17 stories were taken from board minutes or press releases, and there was a noticeable lack of in-depth stories. When asked what the newspaper needed in order to be able to publish more in-depth stories, one editorial employee responded: "More staff, so that we could do features and more people-oriented stories."

The issues analyzed from 1999 (12) contained similar stories as did the issues from 1995 (13). However, there was a more noticeable trend toward the inclusion of stories on local business *growth* than in the 1995 issues.

The only "growth" stories in the 1995 issues were related to stories on the receipt of a grant by the local police department and the awarding of a corporate grant to the local school.

This changed in the 1999 issues analyzed, which ran a total of 12 extensive stories on growth. The reason why may be contained in the headline of one of the

newspaper's stories: "Sullivan County fastest growing county in Missouri" (March 25, 1999).

Population growth can be attributed in large measure to the growth in the Hispanic population. While it comprised 8.8 percent of the county population and 635 residents in the year 2000, there continued to be a noticeable lack of articles related to that population. The editorial staff of the newspaper recognized this. Despite the small staff size, which employed only three editorial staff at the time of this study, editorial staff members expressed the belief that the newspaper has tried to respond to the needs of the county's new residents:

> We don't have many articles in Spanish, but we so have some. We run some Social Security articles in Spanish. We have a lady who works in the health department who can read and write Spanish who does an article in Spanish every now and then.

As in instances with other newspapers involved in this study, the ability of *The Milan Standard* to report and publish news in Spanish seems dependent on individuals who serve as intermediaries between the newspaper and the Hispanic community. This need is not limited to the newspaper but extends to the community as well. One staff member pointed out that: "My daughter works at the local hospital and they need an interpreter when they come in as patients."

The same staffer noted that: "Sometimes (the health department worker) does it. Other time, it's missionaries – two gentlemen who are Jehovah's Witnesses. Nice as can be."

The local school and county social services seem to be the only places that are actively attempting to address the language needs of the new residents. The school district estimates that as many as 500 children were in need of ESL (English

as a Second Language) training in 1999. The school has initiated an ESL program.

Once again, cultural or racial discrimination do not seem to be barriers to acceptance of the new residents by the community and their inclusion in the newspaper. Several staff members at the newspaper expressed deep respect for the work ethic of the new residents.

> The [livestock] plants send for men and they probably have their life's worth in a paper or plastic bag. After awhile, you see them driving cars. They're pretty good savers.

As with other newspapers in other counties involved in this study, language appears the significant barrier. Said one staff member when asked if the Hispanic population represents a potential source of subscribers: "Probably…but I don't know how many of them can read English or Spanish"

As with other publications involved in this study, newspapers like *The Milan Standard* may be missing opportunities for subscriber and advertiser growth because of an inability or lack of desire to actively pursue news relevant to the growing Hispanic population. This may be due to staff limitations. Still, attracting subscribers and advertisers from among the community's new residents seems not only practical, but necessary since a circulation area that once supported five newspapers can support only one.

This may be understandable from a journalism point of view. The big story in Sullivan county is growth and the newspaper's choice of stories reflects that fact. However, a large part of that growth can be attributed to the influx of the Hispanic population drawn to the county by the availability of jobs in the food processing. If it makes journalistic good sense to cover growth, it is inexplicable to omit from

coverage a population whose residents are largely responsible for that growth as well as stories about the industry that is the source of jobs and the growth that results from them.

Again, this may be a benign condition, one resulting from the simple lack of staff to adequately cover local news. One staff member placed this need on a wish list and said another: "

You bring it [news items] to us and we're glad to get it. But we don't have a lot of staff, we don't have anyone who goes out to get it. As far as going out to look for stories and news, we can't do that."

The author returns to a consideration of this staffing problem and suggests ways of addressing it in the final chapter.

***The Monett Times* (daily), Monett, MO, Barry County**

The Monett Times is owned by Cleveland Newspapers, a Birmingham, Alabama-based ownership group. Paid circulation was 4,066 (MPA, 2000).

As with the family-owned *Lawrence County Record*, which publishes in adjoining Lawrence county, similar population changes are affecting Barry county and the staff of *The Monett Times* is similarly aware of those changes and how they are diversifying the newspaper's audience. One editorial executive identified the diversity of the newspaper's audience in the following manner:

> We have residents in the Lakewood subdivision, and there are homes in the hundreds of thousands of dollars out there. We home deliver there. More rural people are different because they get their paper the next day in the mail. We have people who just get our shopper, which is a free publication. There are probably more shopper-type people. They are looking for bargains. *Then you have people who*

don't subscribe and who can't read English [author's italics].

Barry county is as "White" as is Lawrence county according to the Year 2000 census, with 94.1 percent of residents (N=32,489) identifying themselves as "White or Caucasian." Its resident Black population is even smaller than that of Lawrence county, a mere .1 percent, or approximately 35 residents. Editorial staffers also mentioned that there seemed to be a significant growth in the Amish population. A similar observation was made by staff members at *The Lawrence County Record.* This observation could not be confirmed since census records do not provide such a category.

In Barry county, however, the Hispanic population is an even-greater 5 percent and, while the county's overall population grew 23.5 percent or approximately 8,000 between 1990 and 2000, its Hispanic population grew 68 percent to approximately 1,726.In the pages of *The Monett Times*, however, there is virtually no Hispanic representation.

Issues of *The Monett Times* were analyzed each publication day for the first two weeks in January, 1990, 1995 and 2000. The newspaper publishes daily except Saturday and Sunday and each issue contained six to eight pages, excluding advertising supplements.

In the year 1990 and 1995 issues, there was not a single story of specific interest to any minority community, notably the large Hispanic community. The themes that dominated these issues were crime, county growth and business.

Fifteen crime-related stories appeared in the 1990 issues, four given page-one coverage. Among other standard features during this period were columns by

Paul Harvey and Ann Landers (since deceased), an occasional historical retrospective column entitled "Back in the Good Old Days," and, on Fridays, a Church directory, a society page, a television page and an "Outdoor Sportsman" feature.

A nearby chicken processing plant employing many local residents. The company figured prominently in stories of a public relations nature: one describing plant tours available to the public, another profiling the plant's management team.

Issues analyzed for 1995 were virtually identical in terms of the nature of the content. One notable similarity with the nearby *Lawrence County Record* is that both newspapers ran an identical story on Monday, January 30 on the rise in local juvenile crime.

By the year 2000, some changes were apparent. The issues analyzed during this period now ranged from 8 up to 12 pages in length. Crime stories were given prominence; however, they were now taken from page one and included in a section entitled "Court News," which had been an occasional feature in earlier years. There were two wire stories on international news. No international news appeared in previous years' issues.

Only one story related to the local minority community appeared, a page-four story at the time of the Martin Luther King holiday discussing the controversy over the relationship between Thomas Jefferson and his slave, Sally Hemings.

Most striking was the increase in the number of stories related to business and local development, a total of 17 prominently featured stories. As in previous years' issues, there were no stories specifically related to the Hispanic community.

The editorial leadership at *The Monett Times* acknowledged that events related to the local Hispanic community were underreported in the newspaper. However, executives emphasized that this lack of coverage was not for lack of trying to reach the Hispanic audience. They referred the author specifically to the June 18, 1998 issue, an issue not sampled, which ran two full pages: one on plans for the local Hispanic Coalition Fair, another publishing the results of a survey of the health and education needs of the Hispanic community. The author was given a copy of these stories.

Though no stories related to the Hispanic community were noted in any of the issues analyzed by the author, one newspaper staff member also recalled a brief "in-house" page of stories that was abandoned for seeming lack of subscriber and advertiser interest: "I think the newspaper has a responsibility to cover the whole community, but you will have to answer to the owner – we still have to make money."

This anecdote is a microcosm of the author's observations about content. Such a comment can be interpreted to demonstrate that coverage of a significant portion of a newspaper's audience can suffer due to bottom-line considerations. It additionally suggests that money cannot be made by nurturing the potential subscribers and advertisers in the audience component experiencing the fastest growth, the Hispanic community. A growing population is a growing potential audience. The author returns to this important point in the concluding chapter of this study.

Still, at least one newspaper executive at *The Monett Times* seemed aware of

the growing and positive economic impact of Hispanic residents on the local community, particularly as a consequence of and – and benefit to – to the chicken processing plant:

> I've been here seven years and the Hispanic population has grown. They have gone from renters to homeowners. They have prospered. They have built buildings. They have built businesses. There are two Mexican restaurants, a bakery, a video store, a Spanish-language video store, two grocery stores. It's helped the economy. If it weren't for them, [the plant] would be hurting.
>
> [A second chicken processor] have those people living on their company farms, raising the chickens. Dairy farmers use them. You go to the local post office and they are standing in line to buy $600 in money orders to send back to family members in Mexico.

If the Hispanic community consists of prosperous members in growing numbers, why is that reality not reflected in the pages of *The Monett Times*? Surely, language may at least be part of the answer. In a broader sense, however, there do appear to be cultural issues and certain troubling perceptions. The same executive who was so knowledgeable about the number and kind of local Hispanic businesses and the contribution of those residents to the local community noted cultural reservations:

> One shop owner says he enjoys them, they buy stuff. The only problem he has is when they come in as groups and, he says there's usually only one that can speak English.

The executive quickly added: "But he [the store owner] said that a bunch of Americans who went to Mexico would probably travel in a group because maybe only one of them could speak Spanish." Still, it is difficult to completely dismiss cultural perceptions and some level of lack of understanding or prejudice:

> It's not a gang type of thing. It's a herd type of thing. In malls, you watch a group of teenagers because of shoplifting. If you have a group

> of Mexicans, you are trained to watch them because of shoplifting. It's a preconceived notion. You watch them as a group, who they are rather than what they do.

This respondent's misunderstanding extended to less-than-accurate knowledge about the local Hispanic population. When asked if the Hispanic population represented a potential market, this executive said it was "minuscule," underestimating its number (approximately 1,700 in the year 2000) and ignoring its growth as measured by the year 2000 census: "I would say their population is still less than 10 percent. That's not a very big market to begin with and, if you have 700 of them here, then probably less than 10 percent can read English.

Another editorial staff member acknowledged that the Hispanic community is underrepresented by the paper, also acknowledging cultural and particularly linguistic barriers:

> I cannot expect to have the Hispanic audience reading my newspaper. I have no way of knowing whether they do or not, because the way the Hispanic community has developed in this area is that they are very closed mouth. The body of those folks who don't speak English is significant. I ran into a woman yesterday at the gas station. I said something to her and she just smiled and went to her vehicle. She didn't understand a thing I said.
>
> So, yes, there's a major problem in getting an idea to reach that Hispanic audience. And, no, we don't do a fair job of covering that portion of the community.

The same editorial staffer cited how beneficial it was to have had the assistance of two Spanish-speaking United Methodist missionaries serve as go-betweens between the editorial staff and the Hispanic Community, an observation the reader is again reminded was made by other journalists at other newspapers involved in this study.

Content in *The Monett Times* seems to overlook the fact that the county's Hispanic population is its most rapidly growing segment and the paper's largest potential audience.

Newspaper editorial employees acknowledge this growth in the minority population, but seem to continue to regard their primary audience as being residents of a suburban subdivision (Lakewood) and a rural population that receives the newspaper by mail.

Editorial employees voiced concern about the paper's need to earn money, yet inaccurately dismissed the largest growing population (and potentially audience) segment as being "minuscule" in number.

The newspaper is among those in this study that could benefit most from a serious consideration of addressing the information needs of its Spanish-speaking potential audience.

The growth of the Hispanic population is nearly three times the growth of the community's Caucasian population: the Hispanic population in Barry county is presently 5 percent and the county's Hispanic population grew 68 percent to approximately 1,726 while the county's overall population grew 23.5 percent or approximately 8,000 between 1990 and 2000,

This rate of growth was identified incorrectly by some editorial staff members: one identified the Hispanic population as "minuscule," another compared the (presumably) Hispanic population with local suburban residents:

> We have residents in the Lakewood subdivision, and there are homes in the hundreds of thousands of dollars out there….we

> have people who just get our shopper, which is a free publication…they are looking for bargains. Then you have people who don't subscribe and who can't read English.

This latter group is presumably the Hispanic audience. Editorial staff often identified admirable citizen characteristics as part of this Hispanic audience, but did not acknowledge their growth as having potential importance as an audience ("They have gone from renters to homeowners. They have prospered. They have built buildings. They have built businesses" and "One shop owner says he enjoys them, they buy stuff.").

However, in the case of this community, there is evidence in editorial staff comments (though not in the newspaper content) of barely concealed distrust of outsiders and their culture ("If you have a group of Mexicans, you are trained to watch them because of shoplifting. It's a preconceived notion" and "they are very closed mouth. The body of those folks who don't speak English is significant. I ran into a woman yesterday at the gas station. I said something to her and she just smiled and went to her vehicle. She didn't understand a thing I said.).

The author believes, recalling the comments of Clay (1994), that any significant new population might encounter similar problems with acceptance in this community, particularly given its relatively rapid and significant rate of growth.

Again, however, this tendency to ignore in its pages a significant potential source of news and advertising seems to have a rationale not related to market-driven journalism, or to advertisers, or to the marketplace

(audience), a propensity which does not seem to be in the best long-term interests of the newspaper or its financial well-being.

The *Southeast Missourian* (daily), Cape Girardeau, MO, Cape Girardeau County

The *Southeast Missourian* is one of two newspapers involved in this study published and circulated in counties that border the Mississippi River along Missouri's eastern border. It is also the largest newspaper involved in this study in terms of circulation, 19,156 paid in 2000 (MPA, 2000) and the newspaper owned by the largest newspaper group, Rust Communications, which purchased the newspaper in 1999.

Cape Girardeau county was the second most populous of the Missouri counties involved in this study (N=69,511), the most populous being Boone county. Its population is two to 10 times the size of the populations of the other nine counties having newspapers involved in this study.

By the year 2000, Cape Girardeau county's population had grown 1.2 percent from the year 1990, an increase of approximately 825 residents, only slightly less than Missouri's statewide population growth rate of 1.4 percent.

In contrast with the central and southwest Missouri counties, Lawrence, Barry, Pettis and Saline, Cape Girardeau county, while still largely "Caucasian," had the lowest proportion of Hispanic residents and the lowest proportion of Hispanic population growth from 1990 to 2000 of any county home to newspapers involved in this study. No livestock or poultry production plants operated in Cape

Girardeau county at the time of this study. The meat processing industry seems to have spurred the growth of the Hispanic population in other communities involved in this study.

The county did have the second largest proportion of residents, 5.3 percent (N=3,685), behind Boone county's 8.5 percent, identifying themselves in the year 2000 census as "Black or African American" of the counties having newspapers involved in this study.

Cape Girardeau county was also second to Boone county among counties involved in this study in other important categories: median household income ($36,458 versus $37,485), median value of owner-occupied housing ($94,700 versus $107,400) and proportion of residents who have earned at least a Bachelor's degree (21.2 versus 41.7 percent).

As a consequence of these differences in the newspaper from counties in more agriculturally based parts of Missouri, several alternate observations were expected and some were observed.

The differences start with the newspaper's building, production methods and the characteristics of its leadership. The *Southeast Missourian* is housed in a newly remodeled historic old building believed to have been the headquarters of the first Spanish expeditionary commando force west of The Mississippi. The outer walls of the building are decorated with meridian tiled scenes of the newspaper business created in a Spanish motif that might seem more at home in the Kansas City Plaza, or Santa Fe than in Cape Girardeau (www.rosecity.net/murals).

The newspaper had complete digital production capability in early 2000 and

offers a sophisticated online version that is updated daily. Its editor was formerly affiliated with the *Wall Street Journal* and one of the key members of the newspaper management has worked in Russia and is a fluent speaker of the language.

The editorial employees of the newspaper were highly and accurately informed about the demographic changes taking place statewide and, to some extent, in their community. They provided the longest and most detailed interview material of any respondents in the study.

Their concern with crafting a newspaper that suited the needs of a relatively more sophisticated and prosperous audience than is found in counties in other parts of the state clearly seemed to outweigh concerns about representing community diversity in terms simply of ethnicity.

When asked if the newspaper reflects the diversity of the Cape Girardeau community, consider this year 2000 response, which could just as easily be given in a present-day feature about the outsourcing of U.S. jobs to South Asia:

> Yes, definitely. The newspaper very definitely reflects the diversity of our community.
>
> There are different kinds of diversity in communities in a place like Los Angeles. In some places, they'll define diversity ethnically, in other places by [economic] class.
>
> Folks who have a higher education level are normally very diverse. They come from all sorts of backgrounds and, actually, the most computer-literate people are from India.
>
> So, I think newspapers *have to serve* [speaker's emphasis] a very diverse audience. We are supposed to be writing to 6th grade readers. I think we no longer do that. That is one of the things I like about what we are doing. Most newspapers are conservative. We are coming out. We are expanding our universe.

The view of the editorial staff clearly is that, while the community is significantly wealthier, gayer and Blacker than other Missouri communities, their editorial task is, in the words of another editorial staff member: "…to cover events (in diverse communities) as they happen. I don't think we go out of the way looking for those events."

The newspaper issues examined for this study were from the first Monday and Tuesday of each month from 1996 (1990 and 1995 issues were not available as they were being permanently bound) and 1999, and the first Monday and Tuesday of each month for January through March, 2000. The newspaper was redesigned in 2000. All the issues examined contained between 20 and 22 pages, exclusive of advertising and other supplements.

While this goal "to cover and not create news" was evident in the comments of senior editorial employees, one reporter commented: "Our coverage of minorities could be better."

This latter comment appears true, based on analysis of the newspaper's content. Front and back page stories from the issues sampled in 1996 consisted primarily of local interest stories, a total of 23, many above the fold. There were 10 crime stories, three on the page one, and an editorial on the rise in local juvenile crime.

The newspaper published two full editorial and op/ed pages and three pages of primarily local sports, though St. Louis professional sports coverage was present as well. The newspaper also published one full page of U.S. national news and one full page of international news. Color was used prominently on page one.

Coverage generally was in-depth, relating local events to similar events occurring nationally. The newspaper featured several sections and periodic photo essays. Of all the newspapers examined by the author, *The Southeast Missourian* looked most like an urban metro newspaper.

During this period, minority coverage seemed representative, with four stories. Three photographs including minorities appeared on page one, one in a personality profile, a second of an athlete and the third of a touring group of school children. This coverage, while positive, was not extensive.

Design changes were noted in *The Southeast Missourian* during both 1999 and the year 2000, shortly after the newspaper was purchased by its present owner. Issues from both these time periods reflect a time of transition. It may be the case that the newspaper was experimenting with change prior to its sale in 1999 and the new ownership was placing its mark on the newspaper in 2000 after its purchase.

The author finds these design changes notable because there were corresponding editorial content changes. During 1999, there was a similar concentration on local news stories, though there were fewer prominent stories, only five, and they were less in-depth than those published in 1996. Only two crime stories were published. More prominent were stories on potential and actual local business development. Ten such stories were published in the 1999 issues examined.

Year 2000 issues were sampled in part to determine if the design changes and the ownership change from previous years' editions could be seen to reflect changes in the editorial philosophy of the new ownership.

There were some expected changes. The masthead was redesigned (a new logo would later become part of it on the newspaper's web edition). New editorial staff members were profiled, and stories were published about the change in ownership.

A news section appeared during this year. Entitled "Where We Live," this section portrayed communities and profiled individuals and businesses located in different parts of the newspaper's readership area. The stories were accompanied by elaborate black and white photo spreads that lent to this section a very magazine-like feel.

While the ownership change had only recently occurred and few issues published by the new editorial team were available for sampling and analysis, the redesign of both the newspaper and its editorial direction seemed to reflect the newspaper's new mission as defined by one very highly placed executive: "We're practicing what metro papers are going to have to learn if they want to survive: you have to dig deeper and really become part of your community."

It was too early to determine if the editorial staff's spoken commitment to becoming "part of the community" would be reflected in its coverage of the community's minority populations. Senior editorial leadership did indicate that such plans would be developed, starting with an effort to have a greater minority presence in the newsroom. Said one executive (in a comment noted elsewhere in this study):

> The local schools are familiar with the demographic challenges in this area. Working more in partnership, we can start developing and recruiting staff early and seek out the cream of the crop.

> Part of that effort is going to be to develop more of a minority presence on our staff…in our newsrooms. Part of *that* might be a reevaluation of our career track…embracing sending them off to St. Louis and Kansas City. Those can become training grounds. Maybe that leads to a higher caliber reporter that you might have for only two or three years.
>
> Then they can go on, go work for the Gannetts. We become a feeder newspaper.

The *Southeast Missourian* seems to be benefiting from a management and editorial leadership that is knowledgeable about its community and its audience, and prepared to invest in technology that will enhance the quality of the newspaper.

The packaging of the newspaper and its content both reflect the fact that this was the largest newspaper in this study in terms of paid circulation and was committed to invest its editorial resources on crafting a product that was both informative about news and events in the community and representative of the different constituencies comprising its audience.

At the same time, the newspaper's management understands that paper's value to editorial employees may be as a "feeder" to larger newspapers located in larger markets. The newspaper is one in a cluster of regional groups of newspapers privately owned by one family and published in several states. Its management is forward thinking in terms of the newspaper's technology, audience and its relationship with its community.

Summary Interpretation of the Content Analysis

Analysis of the content of the nine newspapers involved in this study reveals several themes, particularly when that content is considered along with many of the

respondents' interview comments.

Most editorial personnel at the newspapers involved in this study understood the concept of market-driven journalism as explicated by McManus (1994), but opposed it and its use in their newspaper. There was little or no evidence of the kind of content that would suggest the newspapers involved in this study were becoming market-driven ("corporatized") in the manner cautioned by McManus.

The author believes this is due at least in part to the fact that the McManus model may not be useful in considering the type of media, community newspapers, involved in this study.

In the case of one newspaper, the *Southeast Missourian,* the possibility of corporate influence on newsmaking decisions could become an issue in the future. The author attributes this to the size of the newspaper, the largest involved in the study, and the fact that it is one publication in a large, likely quite profitable, chain. This could make the newspaper attractive to future outside investors, as has happened with other family-owned newspapers throughout the nation, thus exposing the newspaper to the kind of contaminating investor influence about which McManus cautions.

The author reminds the reader, however, that the McManus model is one that was formulated with research and evidence that was directly applicable only to local television stations and that McManus' cautionary conclusions (McManus, 1994, pp. 183-197) can be applied best only when discussing relatively large and profitable local television stations.

The author did offer an alternate operational definition of market-driven

journalism for application in this study (see p. 58): the use of financial considerations, including relations with advertisers, in decisions about newspaper content.

This definition does seem to have some support in the content of the newspapers examined for this study. This was particularly noticeable in the case of two newspapers: *The Aurora Advertiser*, which allocated a larger proportion of its space to advertising than did any of the other newspapers, and *The Central Missouri News*, whose editorial personnel claimed to place a greater emphasis on favorable news about local businesses (though to a greater extent than was apparent in the content examined for this study).

Other newspapers in this study were committed to editorial over financial considerations both in the comments of their editorial respondents and in the content of their papers. Notable among these newspapers was the small circulation *Boone County Journal*, the larger *Hannibal Courier-Post* and, at least for now, the *Southeast Missourian*. These are the newspapers at which an editorial philosophy inclusive of the nature and information needs of the local audience was most apparent in the content.

Regarding diversity and newspaper content, there were also distinctions among the newspapers. Virtually all editorial personnel interpreted diversity in a manner broader than race or ethnicity. Rather, they saw it as an accurate reflection of their audience.

Using this interpretation, few of the newspapers in this study are doing a good job of covering the diversity of their audience as evidenced by the content of

their newspapers. The most obvious content exclusions, in order, were stories involving:

1. the Hispanic audience, which many respondents identified as "growing" in their respective community;
2. audience members of various religious affiliations. Editorial personnel in several communities identified this as a prominent element of audience diversity, yet offered little in the way of newspaper content except the church directory page carried in several issues of the newspapers examined;
3. the African American audience which was proportionately small by statewide percentage and absolute numbers, but still a potentially significant source of readers and advertisers in several of the smaller communities in this study;

The author will consider this seeming dissonance between the perception of the audience among editorial personnel and the relatively spare inclusion of newspaper stories involving those audience components in Chapter Eight.

Chapter Eight

Conclusions and Recommendations

Review of the Study and its Objectives

This study was undertaken to determine the extent to which journalists at community newspapers have knowledge of market-driven journalism, the extent to which it is reflected in their newspapers, and its possible impact on their newspapers' coverage of their diverse audiences.

Three experts on geography, sociology and community journalism in Missouri were interviewed to provide the author with insights that could be used in the selection of the newspaper sample and of the questions that should be posed to the editorial employee sample. The author then interviewed a convenience sample of 29 editorial employees of nine community newspapers in the state of Missouri.

The 29 editorial employees had journalism responsibilities ranging from reporting and combined reporting and administrative responsibilities to publishers and owners of the respective newspapers.

The employees' experience in journalism ranged from just over one year to over 45 years.

The interviews yielded 46 hours of taped interview material, 42 hours of which were with the journalists and another three hours with the experts noted above. The remaining hour consisted of two brief interviews with experts on the phenomenon of market-driven journalism and diversity in journalism. The

results of all interview material were presented and discussed in Chapters Five and Six of this study.

The content of the newspapers involved in this study was sampled, analyzed and compared in Chapter Seven with the latest available census data in accordance with one method for content analysis described by Krippendorf (2004). The interview material was then interpreted to determine:

1) the extent of the respondents' knowledge of the concept of market-driven journalism on the part of journalists involved in this study;
2) how those journalists interpreted the concept of market-driven journalism and whether they believed it was a factor in the choice of news content at their respective newspaper;
3) the journalists' interpretation of the concept of diversity and the effect of market-driven journalism on the achievement of diversity as they interpreted the concept; and,
4) the extent to which newspaper content reflected market-driven news choices and audience diversity reflected in the latest available census data.

Market-Driven Journalism as Red Herring

The term market-driven journalism is subject to varying interpretation. The concept was first explicated by McManus in a doctoral dissertation (1988) and a book that followed (1994). That research was based on analyses of two data sets. One was a secondary analysis of existing television station viewership data from 29 local stations in small, medium and large markets nationwide (McManus, 1994, pp. 15-16; Baldwin, Barrett and Bates, 1988, unpublished).

McManus' original data consisted of interviews with news directors at four west coast local broadcast television stations.

McManus concluded that the choice of news content at these stations was driven by concerns about addressing the needs and desires of, in order: 1) investors; 2) advertisers; 3) (news) sources; and 4) consumers (the audience) (1994, pp. 22-31). McManus contends that the concerns of investors are by far the dominant factor in news content selection, a phenomenon he termed "market-driven journalism."

As a study limited to the analysis of news content decision made at local television broadcast stations, this was well and good. In fact, McManus limits the initial discussion of his findings to local television (1994, pp. 171-181), asserting that the reason local television is market-driven is that it is inherently "an entertainment medium" (1994, p.171).

McManus' work is similar to research completed by Berkowitz (1993), though the latter's sample of 12 local television stations is larger than one (four), smaller than the other (20). Berkowitz determined, much as had McManus, that tradeoffs exist between journalism judgments and economic considerations in the crafting of local television news. Thus, market-driven journalism has come to be understood by many as a tension that exists between what were termed by McManus as the "public" and "business" norms (1994, pp. 24-26).

However, McManus then extends his market-driven journalism concept and findings across journalism in all its forms: print and broadcast, local and

national (pp. 183-197). McManus' ultimate claim, based on his analyses of local television data, is that news content decisions in all media forms are being determined by the corporatization of media, which itself is being driven primarily by the needs of investors.

The findings of the current study suggest this leap from local television broadcast stations in relatively large markets (McManus' original four-station interview sample) to all media is far too great a leap.

This author's data collection and analysis proceed from a broader perspective: one that is inclusive of the financial models that preceded McManus and the marketplace models that followed (Chapter Two, pp. 31-39).

In constructing interview questions, and collecting and interpreting interview data, this author sought to incorporate early financial models (Litman and Bridges, 1986; Fico, 1986; McCombs, 1987; Lacy, 1992) and more recent marketplace models (Beaudoin and Thorson, 2002).

This resulted in an operational definition of market-driven journalism that seems more applicable to the local community newspaper economic and journalism environment: *market-driven journalism is the use of financial considerations, including relationships with advertisers, as a primary determinant of news content in a newspaper.*

This operational definition of market-driven journalism seeks to recognize that in a small community, small newspaper environment: 1) financial survival may be more difficult than in the profitable world of local television broadcasting described by Berkowitz and McManus; and, 2) individual

advertisers in such an environment could be more likely to wield influence over news content decisions than would investors (if these were to exist at all).

The Uniqueness of Diversity

The author asserts that diversity also can mean something unique in the small community, small newspaper environment, particularly as it defines consumers (the audience), the "trading partner" that McManus determines to have the least amount of influence in news content decisions (1994, p. 32).

Market-driven concerns, however they are defined, are inherently financial, involving the balance between editorial and economic decisions. The use of limited financial resources can involve making choices, thus altering that balance in favor of economic over editorial (what McManus terms respectively the "business" and "journalism" or "public" norms) concerns.

The author was also interested in determining the extent to which market-driven considerations, as defined for this study, had an impact on diversity as that concept was defined by editorial personnel, and the extent to which that diversity was represented in the pages of their respective newspapers.

Diversity is a concept that has had at least two functional definitions: 1) a quantitative measure of the multitude of media vehicles to which an audience can gain access and be informed. Media research in other parts of the world often uses the term diversity to refer to this application of the principle (Iosifides, 1999, p. 152); and 2) the fair representation of the groups – racial,

ethnic, gender and cultural – that comprise the audience for any particular media venue. Media research in the United States generally uses the term diversity to refer to this application of the principle (Chapter Two, pp. 50-61).

The Basic Interview Questionnaire

The questions posed to the editorial employee sample were derived primarily from the review of the literature presented in Chapter Two. Those questions common to all interviews were:

- How widespread is the knowledge of what constitutes "market-driven journalism" among journalism practitioners in small newspaper newsrooms?
- To what extent do financial considerations guide their newspapers' coverage of their communities and are the editorial employees aware of these considerations?
- Do editorial staff members feel their newspapers are representative of the audience in the communities they cover?
- Do the papers, in fact, reflect that feeling in their actual content?

The author now considers the results of the study. Those results are followed by a section on recommendations related to each of the questions posed in this study.

Summary Results of the Study

The findings from this study include:

- The journalists interviewed did grasp the meaning and implications of market-driven journalism, even in those instances when they were unfamiliar with the phrase.
- The journalists interviewed did not always distinguish between market-driven journalism as interpreted by McManus or as defined by the author: a concern for financial considerations, including advertiser relationships, over editorial concerns.
- When they did offer an interpretation, it was more closely aligned with the definition offered by the author (financial and advertiser concerns) than the interpretation offered by McManus (investor relations and media corporatization).
- The journalists interviewed expressed the belief that their newspapers were not guided more by concerns for profit than for journalism, though most noted that profitability was important for the continued wellbeing of their newspaper.
- Most journalists interviewed were aware, with varying degrees of accuracy, of the changes in the audience that were taking place in their communities and among their readership.
- Despite this awareness, only two journalists interviewed believed their newspaper was doing an adequate job of representing the audience diversity of their community, whether that diversity was interpreted by those journalists as being economic, religious or ethnic.

- Newspaper content did, for the most part, confirm the journalists' observation that their communities' diversity was not being adequately represented, nor was that diversity represented on the staffs of the newspapers.
- Newspapers in the study with more resources, notably the relatively large *Southeast Missourian*, did do a better job of covering their audience than did most newspapers with fewer resources, though the *Boone County Journal,* which had the smallest circulation of any newspaper in the study, was an exception to this general observation.
- This suggests that editorial commitment can offset the potentially damaging (to the "public" norm) effects of newspaper size and profit potential that may lead to concern for business over public norms; that is, market driven journalism as interpreted by McManus.

A detailed analysis of these findings by question follows, along with related recommendations for future action and study.

Question #1: How widespread is the knowledge of what constitutes "market-driven journalism" among journalism practitioners in small newspaper newsrooms?

The journalists involved in this study were not always aware of market-driven journalism as an academic concept (McManus, 1994) Underwood (1998) and in previous work by Gross, et.al.(2001, 2002).

Most of the editorial employees [20] did not demonstrate familiarity with the term market-driven journalism. Their responses to the question itself ranged from: "No, never heard of it" to "Oh, sure" and everything in between. Awareness of the phrase seemed more apparent among those with managerial

responsibilities, publishers and managing editors particularly [nine], than among staff editorial employees.

Although familiarity with the phrase "market-driven journalism" was not common to all respondents, familiarity with the implications of the practice was common to all respondents to varying degrees dependent on the journalism experience of the respondent and the depth of the interview questions.

All respondents demonstrated an awareness of the financial versus editorial considerations that can influence the selection of news, even the least experienced staff member in the study.

Familiarity with the term was confined to those participating journalists who each had five or more years of journalism experience, and whose position was that of editor, publisher or publisher/owner. Furthermore, with the exception of two respondents (both owner/publishers), those journalists with knowledge of the term "market-driven journalism worked at two of the largest newspapers involved in this study, *The Southeast Missourian* and the *Hannibal Courier-Post*.

This would suggest that those with significant experience in journalism were familiar with the term from regular reading of trade or academic publications in which the term has lately come into use, through attendance and participation at trade conferences or through conversations with interested peers.

Although the total sample of journalists is too small to yield sizable results, the 29 respondents indicate a direct positive relationship between

knowledge of the term market-driven journalism and newspaper size, position of the respondent at the newspaper and the respondent's years of journalism experience.

Even relatively recent employees at the smallest newspapers involved in this study had some understanding of market-driven journalism, though their interpretation was often quite different from the term's explication by McManus (1994). More often, the respondents' interpretation of the term was in agreement with the definition used by the author for the purpose of this study: concern for financial norms, including advertiser relationships, over journalism norms.

All respondents in this study were generally knowledgeable about the financial pressures on newspapers, particularly on newspapers in markets where the subscription base is small and the potential advertisers few, a scenario common among most newspapers and communities involved in the study.

However, respondents differentiated between financial pressures on their newspapers and market-driven journalism, and it is that distinction to which the author calls attention.

While virtually all respondents agreed that operating a small newspaper in a small community has inherent financial pressures, no respondent identified a specific instance in recent times in which their newspaper succumbed to any real or imagined pressure to "place" stories specifically to please advertisers or hold stories that had the potential to offend advertisers. Their newspapers were not engaging in market-driven journalism as defined by the author for the

purposes of this study: a concern for financial, including advertiser relationships, over journalism norms.

For these journalists, market-driven journalism had the potential practical consequence of offending advertisers. This is differentiated from the financial pressures inherent in running a small newspaper. These financial pressures, not market-driven journalism as interpreted by the respondents, result in not being able to afford adequate editorial staff to cover their audience or hire staff with specialized skills, such as Spanish-language skills or beat reporting assignments in specific areas, such as local or economic news.

One exception to this observation regarding financial pressures was the *Southeast Missourian*. This newspaper had the largest circulation of any in the study. Management made a substantial investment in technology. As a result, the newspaper was produced in a state-of-the-art facility and initiated a daily updated online edition in 1999 (which it has maintained and improved).

The *Southeast Missourian* also committed resources to its editorial staff, which was larger and more specialized than that of any newspaper in this study. At the time interview data was being gathered, the newspaper was recruiting nationally for a managing editor. The editor's particular concern was that the incumbent of this position be able to successfully mentor young journalists.

The author identified two instances in which editorial personnel cited advertiser influence in the selection of news content as something that was desirable: in one case because it was deemed appropriate to favorably cover

large advertisers; in the other, because editorial personnel expressed a preference for more advertising over editorial content.

The author determined that the McManus version of market-driven journalism could at some future time become a consideration at the *Southeast Missourian,* perhaps because its size and ownership may make it highly attractive to investor interest:

1) It is the largest newspaper involved in this study with a circulation just under the 20,000 limit for the year 2000; and,
2) it is one newspaper among a group of privately owned newspapers clustered in different regions of the United States.

These factors could make the newspaper attractive to future investors contingent on its future profitability. This, in turn, could make the newspaper susceptible to the kind of investor demands addressed by McManus.

Observers have for some time voiced concern that media concentration is too great (Compaine and Gomery, 2000; McManus, 1994; Underwood 1993, 1998). This has led to fears that competition will be diminished by a diminishing number of voices, particularly at the local level (Compaine and Gomery, p. 1, pp. 573-578).

To be market-driven in the McManus sense, even for a newspaper, would then seem to require that the media venue in question needs to be larger and have more profit potential, self-limiting factors in a small community.

Market-driven journalism in the McManus sense of the term seems inappropriate for application in the small community, small newspaper

environment in which the author conducted this research. Perhaps this is because the concept was not formed with small communities and small newspapers in mind and there has been no research to support its application in such a media environment.

Market-Driven Journalism: Let the Journalists Beware?

There has been little research involving the phenomenon of market-driven journalism since McManus coined the term in the title of his 1994 book. A communications database search of market-driven journalism (EBSCOhost, 2004, Aug. 16) yields only 17 articles since 1994, two by this author and his colleagues.

However, a Nexis search of newspaper and trade publication articles yields 125 published articles in newspapers and the trade press referring to market-driven journalism in only the past six months (LexisNexis, 2004, Aug. 22).

The term market-driven journalism was framed by its originator (McManus, 1994) in a manner that is pejorative and lends itself to a negative interpretation, particularly among journalists, whose training and professional experience would tend to make them more concerned about championing "journalism" or "public" over "business" norms.

The sinister nature of the term (see this study, p. 38) market-driven journalism may be appealing to journalists in search of a convenient negative reference to the financial pressures in contemporary journalism, however that financial pressure is defined.

Market-driven journalism has come to be applied to *all* economic aspects of journalism, whether the simple matter of earning enough profits to keep the newspaper functioning or the pressures from investors that result in the "contamination:" the conglomeration or corporatization intended by McManus' interpretation of the phenomenon.

Question #2: To what extent do financial considerations guide newspaper's coverage of their communities and are the editorial employees aware of these considerations?

This question sought to determine if the attitudes of journalist-respondents in the study interpreted market-driven journalism more in line with the McManus explication or the author's operational definition of the term as applied in this study.

While seven of the respondents involved in this study were aware of both the definition and implications of "market-driven journalism," all but one respondent had an understanding of the implications of market-driven journalism at their particular newspapers. This understanding was in evidence irrespective of the newspaper's size, the position of the employee at the newspaper or the respondent's number of years of journalism experience.

The common element was the understanding that, for the respondent and for his or her newspaper, market-driven journalism consisted of giving more extensive and/or favorable coverage in the newspaper to advertisers or prospective advertisers of the newspaper.

Only two respondents indicated that this practice occurred regularly at their newspaper. Both were employed at the same, relatively small newspaper,

which perceived itself in direct competition for the available advertisers and advertising revenue. That newspaper had limited financial resources, as evidenced by the fact that the paper employed only three reporters, two of whom worked part-time.

Three other respondents indicated an awareness of the potential problem, but also indicated they did not have direct knowledge of the practice occurring at their newspaper.

All other respondents except one indicated an awareness of the practice as a potential problem for the journalism profession, but made it clear that such a practice would not even be a consideration at their own newspapers. That one remaining respondent suggested that financial considerations might be having some influence at that journalist's newspaper.

All respondents indicated acceptance of the notion that practicing journalists have to learn to market their newspaper as well. This finding was common to all participants. In this sense, the point of view of the 29 respondents in this study of community journalists was identical with the point of view of the 76 editorial respondents in the author's secondary data analysis study of market-driven journalism and the attitudes towards it at the *Los Angeles Times* (2001).

There are lessons to be gleaned from this similarity among journalists at a large, urban newspaper owned by a prosperous corporation – the *Los Angeles Times* is now owned by the Tribune Company – and 29 journalists employed at nine community newspapers.

One apparent similarity is that financial pressures are prevalent throughout the journalism industry. Those pressures are now commonly felt by the individual print journalist as well, and they are felt wherever the journalists or their publications happen to be on the journalism food chain.

This may help account for the reason that the term market-driven journalism has gained such broad acceptance in any discussion about journalism economics beyond the narrow interpretation appropriate to McManus' explication of the term. This is illustrated by the following example.

On June 4, 2004, the Tribune Company announced budget cuts of four percent at the *Los Angeles Times* because of a drop in the newspaper's advertising revenues. The irony is that the *Times* had just won five Pulitzer Prizes, the newspaper's largest ever annual cache of journalism's highest award. The newspaper had accomplished this feat with a newsroom the number of editorial employees of which had already been reduced, primarily through attrition, from 1,200 employees in December, 2000 to 1,100 by December, 2003, a loss of eight percent of the editorial staff.

For the *Los Angeles Times*, this was not even the bulk of the budget-cutting. That had already occurred in the advertising, circulation and other business divisions of the newspaper, where full-time staff was reduced from 2,300 in December, 2000 to 1,500 in December, 2003.

Commenting on the Tribune Company's decision, Bank of America Securities Analyst John Janedis noted that the Tribune Company's cash flow margins, a measure of profit, are lower in 2004 to date (25.9 percent) than for

competitors Gannett (32 percent), Scripps 31.3 percent) Lee (27.4 percent) and the Journal Register (27.3 percent). Prior to its merger with Times Mirror, the Tribune Company's cash flow was at a healthier 28.4 percent.

Janedis then offered a journalistically chilling analysis of the state of the *Times* and perhaps of the future of journalism:

> Although journalism is important, at the end of the day, *investors care more about the number of newspapers you sell* [author's italics] and the ad rate increases you get, rather than the number of Pulitzer Prizes.

Citing the newspaper journalists have long loved to hate, Janedis pointed to *USA Today,* the ubiquitous flagship newspaper of The Gannett Chain:

> Look at *USA Today*: how many Pulitzers have they won [*USA Today has yet to win a Pulitzer Prize*]? But they sell a lot of advertising and get good rate increases.

Small newspapers such as those involved in this study are not concerned about selling newspapers because of the need of public corporations to appear more attractive to investors, the caution appropriate to the McManus use of the term. They are concerned about selling newspapers to earn enough to keep the lights on, surely an economic consideration, but not market-driven journalism in the McManus sense, or in the sense of the above example.

The pressure for profitability is great across the newspaper industry; however, the financial pressures that face small community newspapers are extreme, most often expressed in the newspapers' inability to pay for additional editorial staff. In fact, five community newspapers in Missouri (of 45 total given that designation in 2000) ceased operations during the time this study was

originally researched and being written (MPA, 2000; MPA 2004), nearly 12 percent.

Respondents in this study said financial pressures interfere with their newspaper's ability to deliver the ideal news product. In this study, there was only one exception to this general "rule," a newspaper owned by a Rust Communications, a family group that owned and operated a total of 11 dailies and 27 weeklies in eight states.

Still, only two among the 29 editorial respondents in this study indicated that financial pressures, particularly competition for advertising with a competing daily newspaper, affected the newspaper's choice of stories and resulted in a more favorable slant to its coverage of desirable potential advertisers. They did not perceive market-driven journalism, as operationally defined by this author, as a factor in the choice of content at their newspaper.

Though no staff member believed their newspaper's content was guided more through by market than journalism considerations, it was clear to the author that, except in the case of the *Southeast Missourian*, money was certainly a concern.

Gross, et. al. (2001) determined that there was a ready acceptance among journalists at the *Los Angeles Times* to see their role as both one of sound business, particularly marketing, and sound journalism.

Diversity in the Newsroom and Newspaper

Newspaper journalism holds a unique position in American history and law. The evolution of history and law is, in part, reflected in journalism when one considers the question of diversity.

Interpreted by some (Iosifides, 1999) as a concept designed to ensure the multiplicity of the quantity of voices in civic debate, diversity has evolved in America as a concept designed to encourage the inclusion of that full range of expression of the quality of the "voices" in American civic debate, ethnic, racial and cultural.

This interpretation of diversity is becoming more prevalent as the American population swells and the nation's borders come to include more newcomers of different cultures and color. Every source consulted for this study – regional experts, journalists and the data of the year 2000 U.S. Census – noted that the state of Missouri and all of the communities that are home to the newspapers in this study are undergoing change in the qualitative nature of diversity.

The author could not expect that the newsrooms of the newspapers involved in this study would yet be truly reflective of the changes that are occurring in their communities. In fact, the newsrooms did not reflect those changes.

The author likewise could not anticipate that the newspapers' content would be reflective of the news and concerns of the more recent members of their communities. In fact, the newspapers did not adequately reflect those

changes, though it should be said that many of the newspapers involved in this study have made attempts to be more inclusive.

The editorial employees themselves indicated awareness of the changes in their communities that are changing their newspapers' audience members. They also indicated an awareness that these changes are not adequately reflected in the editorial pages of their respective newspapers and, perhaps more important, that these changes should be reflected in their newspapers.

There exists a gap between changes in the communities' audience and the coverage of those audiences in the pages of the newspapers involved in this study. The demographic changes in the communities involved in this study were perceived by editorial employees as occurring, and are in fact occurring according to the latest available census data.

However, the absolute numerical increase in those diverse audience members may not yet seem significant enough to warrant inclusion of those audiences as part of the audience the newspapers need to address now. Rather, these diverse audience members may represent only potential sources of future readership and advertisers at present to the editorial respondents in this study.

Is Covering Changing Communities Profitable?

When asked why their newspapers did not yet reflect the changing constituencies of their communities, no respondent cited a deliberate attempt to exclude certain audiences. In fact, all indicated a willingness to cover diverse communities and the accomplishments of those communities' members.

It was clear to the author from the responses of editorial personnel that most of the newspapers involved in this study lack the resources to commit qualified editorial personnel to the coverage of diverse communities. Those resources that are lacking are primarily financial. This takes practical expression in the form of too few staff and insufficient language capability among editorial staff to adequately cover diverse communities such as some of the communities involved in this study.

Models such as those proposed by McManus have long assumed that bigger is badder for media organizations. Concentration is seen as leading to corporatization and homogenization of coverage, not economies of scale and the availability of resources for investment in communities otherwise absent from the media agenda. The author takes issue with this perspective.

Larger journalism organizations have the advantage of being able to commit significant resources to audiences that would otherwise be underserved. Most, though not all, of the community newspapers involved in this study do not enjoy the financial resources that could allow them to adequately cover changing communities.

Perhaps this is why so many responses were focused on the need for serving their audience, but being attuned to the needs of their actual and prospective advertisers. More profits can lead to better coverage in an atmosphere that values the journalism norm whiles recognizing the advantage of business success.

If bigger is not badder, it is not necessarily better. When looked at more deeply, the resources cited as lacking by the interviewees in this study are not exclusively financial. The absent resource may be in part cultural: a resistance to change in community acceptance of different cultures resulting from changes in the economic base and demography of some of the communities in this study.

Most of the newspapers involved in this study are located in communities where the economic base has shifted from manufacturing of capital goods to either service agriculture-related manufacturing, primarily in livestock slaughter, production and packaging.

The economies that built these communities were economies built by the railroad as the author notes in Chapter Four, either in the manufacture of railroad components and infrastructure, or in the production and transportation of goods made possible by the extensive railroad network created in states like Missouri. That network connected not only cities and towns but also cities and towns with river ports, primarily those on the Mississippi River.

The economic importance of the railroad has diminished, replaced by an Interstate Highway System with major north-south and east-west links in Missouri. Gone is the heavy manufacturing of goods that used railroads and rivers as a means of nationwide distribution.

Railroad and heavy manufacturing jobs were, in their time, high wage jobs. This is still reflected in the "old money" that still exists in some of the communities involved in this study, communities like Hannibal and Cape Girardeau located on the Mississippi River. The high-wage jobs have been

replaced by lower-wage agriculture and service jobs, many of which are very low-paying.

In many instances, the jobs that exist for workers in the new economy are so low paying that the workforce must be aggressively recruited by companies. This is the case in the poultry and pork food processing industries, which have a large presence in and near the towns involved in this study.

The workers recruited into these low-wage enterprises in the state of Missouri are often from Mexico. They are often poorly educated and Spanish-speaking.

Covering changing communities like these requires that editorial workers at newspapers to have both the curiosity – the essential element in all good journalism – to learn the community's culture and the language ability to communicate comfortably and report accurately in that community. In other words, continued editorial commitment by newspapers in this study to the traditional function of journalism, informing the people, may go a long way in paving the way for acceptance of all audience members by the community.

Though respondents in this study, particularly editors and publishers, commented on the lack of resources as the reason for their lack of coverage of diverse communities in their audience, they invariably expanded on their answer to include "problems with communications," "finding Spanish-speaking sources," "understanding the people" as the specific problem. They believe their coverage suffered from the lack of Spanish-speaking editorial employees. Spanish-speaking residents seem to be making up an increasing percentage of

the potential new subscriber and advertiser base in several of the communities involved in this study. However, existing resources are not committed to coverage of that community.

There are several potential explanations, but three that seem more likely based on interview data from the editorial respondents.

One is that the audience segments in question are not yet sufficient in number, influence or financial power to merit the allocation of limited resources to coverage.

A second possibility is that the newspapers are committed to their existing audience and their editorial management staff chooses not to cover the potential new audience members because they do not yet perceive these changes in their community as being permanent. It is possible that newspaper owners feel they cannot rely upon the long term presence of an audience in which they invest scarce editorial resources and are therefore hesitant to initially invest those resources.

Finally, and least likely in the view of the author, gatekeepers – editors and publishers – at the newspapers in this study were deliberately excluding coverage of this diverse constituency, except in the case of crime stories and some public service announcements.

Referring to the most likely scenario, perhaps the newspapers are not addressing the needs the market because they do not yet perceive that a market exists. In all communities involved in this study, the absolute number of Hispanic audience members was small, though growing. Yet, even in those

communities where the African American population was of a similar size, coverage of that community was not adequate. These communities may be perceived as an audience, but not as potential profit centers.

Gade (1999), Shoemaker and Reese, and Beaudoin and Thorson (2002) all have observed that markets with lower potential for profit tend to be underserved by media, at least until such time as they are deemed potentially profitable. McManus (1994) goes further in his theory of market-driven news production, stating that the production of news, at least in the case of local broadcast television, is produced primarily to satisfy the demands of the station's real or prospective investors. .

Most respondents noted change in the composition and growth in the number of diverse audience components in the communities involved in this study. Their comments also support the belief that these audience members merit more thorough coverage in the pages of their newspapers.

However, diverse ethnic and racial populations are relatively small in the communities involved in this study. Census data from the year 2000 as well as estimates for the future note that population growth is lower by percentage in Missouri than in the rest of the nation. However, growth in minority populations in communities involved in this study is high relative to the growth rate for Missouri as a whole (though still relatively small in absolute terms), particularly the Hispanic population. This may account for the observation on the part of the respondents that these populations merit more thorough coverage.

There appears to be a gap between the perception on the part of the respondents that certain populations are growing rapidly and merit more coverage, and the willingness of the newspapers' management to allocate or invest in the resources needed to ensure the coverage.

Why ignore the financial potential of a growing audience segment in a business that is lacking financial resources? The author believes newspaper editorial personnel perceive rapid increases in certain populations, particularly the Hispanic audience, and want to increase coverage of this audience component as a function of their "public" or "journalism" perspective.

However, those responsible for allocating editorial resources may see the increasing number of Hispanic audience members as either a temporary phenomenon or a component of their marketplace that is too low-wage and not yet financially viable, hence not yet worth the investment, a function of their "business" perspective.

Question #3: Do editorial staff members feel their newspapers are representative of the audience in the communities they cover?

This question, in one sense, seems to assume that respondents would have accurate knowledge of the nature of the potential audience in the communities in which the newspaper published. This was not always the case though, as noted above, respondents perceived greater changes in their audience than were actually occurring.

Only 12 respondents estimated percentages of particular audience groups in their coverage area, and the estimates were not always accurate. These estimates were of the growing Hispanic population (five cases) and, in two

cases, the proportion of the Black or African American population. In two instances, respondents alluded to populations of gays.

Most striking was the identification by 10 of the respondents of religious denominations as a significant demographic portion of their audience. This suggests that audience diversity was viewed by respondents in a manner different from that in large urban areas like Los Angeles or Miami, where diversity was identified by respondents in the author's earlier published studies by ethnicity or cultural heritage; for example, as "Latino," or as "consisting of 100 plus language communities." (Gross, et. al., 2001).

However, the respondents, many of whom spoke thoughtfully about the need to include more coverage of (particularly) Hispanics, did not express the need for increased coverage of issues that might be of interest to audience members of religious groups whose numbers were significant.

This suggests that editorial respondents may feel more of a public need to cover certain audience segments even though the composition of their marketplace would make covering other certain other groups a better business decision.

All but three respondents agreed that their newspapers are "not representative" of the audience in the communities they cover. All but two of those 26 respondents agreed that it was the lack of resources, specifically "reporters" or "language fluency," that resulted in the non-representative nature of their newspaper's coverage. None believed that their newspaper's lack of coverage of certain audience members was in any way intended to be

exclusionary or racist, although two respondents alluded to problems with the "different culture" of some audience members in their community.

It seems a necessary and responsible journalism decision to cover segments of an audience whose absolute numbers are too small to contribute significantly to the financial well-being of newspaper like those included in this study. However, allocating very scarce resources to this public function could jeopardize the financial well-being of such newspapers. Content might then appeal to a worthy, but too-small group of potential audience members and advertisers.

In the McManus world of market-driven journalism, such a difficult decision does not exist. Financial health of media is assumed. The caution, in reality, is that increased profits results in poorer journalism. Media become corporatized. In the McManus model, whether investors or the people set the agenda is the real concern.

This seems a frankly elitist view. A newspaper owner or publisher of newspapers such as those in this study in the communities they serve is simply not a media mogul in the Bagdikian (or McManus) sense. He or she is, as were the owner/publishers involved in this study, probably a good community citizen seeking to operate a reasonably successful business that happens to also be a good newspaper. Much as they might wish to cover underserved components of their audience, they do not have and cannot supply the financial resources to accomplish it.

Though market-driven journalism is often understood as a tension that exists, a push-pull between the journalism and business norms, it is more of a guns-or-butter choice for the management of the newspapers involved in this study.

Still, this does not diminish the concern on the part of editors, and sometimes reporters, involved in this study who felt a sincere need to devote more ink and inches to their audience.

Including coverage of small-and-growing or just plain small audience segments is a worthy goal, particularly in small communities where local information sources may be more limited.

In the large, corporate media world, there are sufficient resources to choose guns *and* butter. The large newspaper can choose to shift the proportions of its coverage to ensure all its publics are being served. True, this may offend some readers and/or advertisers at the expense of others. Such decisions may have impact on the newspaper's bottom line. Indeed, in the McManus journalism world, choices would be made in favor of the journalism norm even if the business of the newspaper suffered reduced profits. However, this would be a choice about the content published in a newspaper assured of relative financial success irrespective of the choice.

In the newsroom of a paper such as the *San Jose Mercury News*, with an editorial staff over 300, managers can choose to establish programs to hire editorial personnel with skill sets that will permit some coverage of even the smallest audience segments. As recommended in ASNE 2000, large

organizations can even establish target hiring and diversity programs such as that initiated at the *Los Angeles Times,* large newspaper organizations are making decisions of not-as-scarce resources in such a circumstance.

This is surely not the world of the community newspaper studied by the author. In that world, such choices can be fiscal, and perhaps editorial, life or death. The owners, publishers and often editors personnel at a newspaper with three or four reporters, the situation at most of the newspapers in this study, cannot be concerned about how their newspaper would be valued by Wall Street. It is already difficult to cover Main Street.

Over the course of the years (2000-2004) that interviews were conducted and content gathered for this study, Missouri lost five newspapers, from 301 to 296, and a circulation of 432,883, from 2,264,673 to 1,831,790 (MPA, 2000, 2000-2004). All five of the newspapers that ceased publication were small, community newspapers, reducing the number of community newspapers in Missouri, as defined by the Missouri Press Association, from 45 to 40, nearly 12 percent.

At the same time, the state's population was increasing, albeit slower than for the U.S. as a whole. Fewer newspapers were available to serve more people, an increasing number of whom were ceasing to read them. Granted, the State's Hispanic population was growing rapidly by comparison (http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/29000.html). However, this growth was proceeding from a relatively small numerical base.

If your newspaper employs only three or four reporters, can one be assigned to cover stories of interest to only the .3 percent of its audience who are African American? Or the five percent who are Hispanic? This is difficult as a simple matter of business. Still, enhancing coverage of these communities was mentioned as a goal by several of the respondents in this study, particularly experienced editors, and such inclusive coverage remains a laudable journalism goal.

How, then, can coverage of underserved communities be accomplished in the small world of the community newspaper, where every decision is financial and every financial decision can threaten the paper's continued existence?

Recommendations for Implementation and Further Study

1) Market-driven Journalism as interpreted by McManus and commonly understood since 1994 does not explain the interaction between the journalism and business norms in the world of the small community newspaper. A new model needs to be developed that recognizes the importance of the newspaper-advertiser relationship.

It is clear from the data gathered for this study that existing models do not adequately address the editorial and financial circumstances unique to community newspapers like those in this study.

The commonly used interpretation of market-driven journalism as intended by McManus is inappropriate and misapplied in discussing the world of the community newspaper.

McManus' concern about corporatization and "contamination" of the journalism norm by excessive concern for the business norm may be appropriate at a *San Jose Mercury-News,* the *Los Angeles Times* or similar corporate publications. However, the real concern at newspapers like the *Boone County Journal*, circulation 1,775 in 2000 (MPA, 2000), the *Central Missouri News,* circulation 4,455 (MPA, 2000), and other newspapers of similar size is generating enough circulation and advertising revenue to stay in business. These are not market-driven newspapers; they are financially constrained newspapers. Concern on the part of their owners and publishers about how their investment potential might be viewed is a waste of time.

The marketplace model proposed by Beaudoin and Thorson (2002) seems more applicable in the world of community journalism because it does recognize the importance of the audience, the source of circulation revenue. This is surely a more significant factor in a small community than are prospective Wall Street investors.

If members of currently underserved audience segments in the communities studied had or were perceived as having significant financial resources, they might be more likely to be "courted" by the newspaper in that community. Their financial potential might then justify financial investment

However, such a marketplace model also may be misapplied, particularly in the specific case of most of the newspapers in this study. While there are growing audience segments in many of the communities discussed, particularly the Hispanic audience, these segments are unlikely for several years

to reach a level sufficiently viable to justify the allocation of resources needed to justify coverage. Certain segments of some communities, for example an African American audience of .3 percent in two Missouri counties in this study, will never become large enough to be significant advertising targets.

While editorial personnel may perceive the existence in their community of certain groups, and deem coverage of those segments appropriate to meeting the journalism goals of their newspaper, the inadequate size of these audience segments makes them loss leaders in an enterprise that cannot afford loss.

What factors determine the viability of an audience, the existence of a marketplace for community newspapers like those involved in this study: language skills, literacy, availability to and facility with technology or simple economics? In what order do these factors matter and do they matter in small communities as they do in larger communities?

The author believes these are important questions for the future of community newspaper journalism and merit further research if a marketplace model is to be successfully applied to newspapers in small communities.

The author asserts that both Market and marketplace models are inadequate and study should be undertaken to investigate the possibility that a relationship exists between the community newspaper and the advertiser that may be healthy and symbiotic, not necessarily parasitic, to the journalism goals – the public norm – of the small newspaper.

2) The audience of community newspapers may be relatively small and homogenous; however, this need not necessarily doom coverage of small

audience segments. Innovation and implementation of cooperative programs between small newspapers and national journalism organizations, foundations and educational institutions can aid coverage of communities and instill an understanding of the journalism norm in the next generation of journalists.

Every journalist interviewed for this study, particularly editors and publisher/owners, mentioned that their newspaper was short of editorial staff. This is a persistent condition made worse by the fact that small newspaper salaries are traditionally low, making it difficult to retain qualified journalists.

The author was particularly struck by the comment of one respondent who viewed his/her newspaper as a training ground for journalists seeking to progress in their careers to large newspapers and chains.

At large newspapers, such a career progression exists because of the size and vertical nature of the organization. Such a career path has always existed for the young journalists starting at small newspapers who are adept at gaining relevant experience and contacts. The career ladder already in place at large newspapers and chains could be more formally instituted at small newspapers with the aid of national journalism organizations and educational institutions.

National or regional programs could be established that would select talented journalism students and young journalists with specialized skills, place them with a community newspaper and provide one year's salary or share the salary cost with the participating newspaper over a longer period of time. Such

programs exist to a very limited extent at some of the nation's elite journalism schools.[5]

A program such as the author describes would be essentially a post-graduate assistantship program for potential and promising journalists. Such a program could:

- identify students with skills needed in small communities, particularly language skills;
- aid in diversifying the participating newspaper and its coverage;
- provide incentives that would encourage young journalists to explore and remain in journalism, thus helping train a generation of young journalists with specialized skills and a more desirable career path;
- mentor young journalists, perhaps with an affiliation between the participating newspaper and a sponsoring college or university;
- infuse young journalists with a strong sense of the public good legacy of journalism which they could embrace throughout their journalism career, particularly at a time when the reputation of journalism has suffered;
- accomplish these goals at minimal or no cost to cash-strapped community newspapers.

It has not been uncommon for businesses, newspapers among them, to establish diversity as a goal, to seek to be truly representative of its audience. One recent and well-known example of seeking to achieve diversity in this manner was ASNE 2000 (American Society of Newspaper Editors, 1997). It

[5] The author's own experience as a foreign correspondent was a direct result of a scholarship grant and subsequent placement assistance in Japan sponsored at Columbia University by a Foundation. Japanese language skill was a requirement, and only one such grant was available annually.

established quantified hiring goals, but has thus far failed to achieve its objective of and making newsrooms more representative and diverse.

Quantified hiring goals have been one way of seeking to achieve diversity in several areas of American society. The recent Supreme Court decision in *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003) affirmed the desirability of seeking to encourage diversity in a case involving University graduate school admissions. However, the decision in the accompanying case, *Gratz v. Bollinger* (2003), found that quantifying such goals by assigning points or stating quantified targets is a violation of the Equal Protection Clause.

This could mean that programs that seek to expand diversity in a manner similar to ASNE 2000 or others with quantifiable targets could, in the future, fail in court. It would be important for programs seeking to expand diversity in their newsrooms and coverage do so in a manner such as that suggested by the author: one that rewards certain skills needed by the newspaper and community in question.

Such a program could:

1) Select talented journalism students and young journalists with specialized skills; and

2) place them with a community newspaper and provide one year's salary or share the salary cost with the participating newspaper over a longer period of time.

At the present time, many state journalism associations, colleges and universities and granting organizations and agencies provide scholarship funds

for journalism training at the university level. However, there is little post-graduate incentive for students to pursue a career that is poorly paid and sometimes perceived as being located in a less-than-desirable small community.

While the recent Supreme Court decision in *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003) affirmed the desirability of seeking to encourage diversity, the decision in *Gratz v. Bollinger* (2003) found that quantifying such goals by assigning points or stating quantifiable goals is a violation of the Equal Protection Clause.

This could mean that programs such as ASNE 2000 or others with quantifiable targets could fail in court. The author believes that a program such as the one suggested could help achieve diversity goals and benefit all participants.

3) Community newspaper journalists interviewed for this study seem committed to journalism and to their communities. However, they often did not seem to identify with the larger journalism world. This would seem to be a particular problem with those likely to enter the community journalism world: recent graduates assessing journalism as an appropriate career. The author believes it is necessary to conduct continuing education of professional journalists at the community newspaper level. Those individuals would benefit from programs that integrate them into the larger community of journalists, instilling in them a sense of professionalism and of legacy. Assuming they go on to positions at large newspapers, this grounding could serve to help "immunize" young journalists from those concerned about the corporatization of media.

Journalists today have more education than at any time before (Bagdikian, 1990), but that education often stops when their jobs as journalists begin (McManus, 1994, p. 203). As financial pressures and the impetus toward a journalism that is market-driven increases, it becomes increasingly important to continue the practical and ethical education of journalists on the job, particularly in the case of community newspaper journalists.

In his own recommendations 10 years ago, McManus noted that "Much of the literature of new technologies for producing and delivering news is giddy with enthusiasm. The drawbacks have been little explored."(1994, p. 208).

The adoption of technology is inevitable among newspapers of all sizes. Four of the nine newspapers in this study already publish online editions and others already use digital printing technology. If journalists are to continue to be a credible source of information for their audience, it is imperative that they learn to properly use that technology as a tool of journalism, not one solely for ease and profit.

Continuing education, both practical and technological, would give young journalists at community newspapers a "toolbox" that they could carry with them throughout their journalism careers.

Conclusion

In undertaking this study, it was the author's goal to work toward a fresh, if not definitive, interpretation of market-driven journalism as a concept that has come into common use, but lacks a common understanding.

It is the author's hope that this study will encourage other investigators to look at marker-driven journalism with a fresher point of view and a clearer understanding, qualities useful to scholars and journalists alike.

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www.rosecity.net/murals (murals of Cape Girardeau county project information)

www.semissourian.com

www.census.gov

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