REPORTER PERCEPTIONS OF INFLUENCES ON MEDIA CONTENT: A
STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODEL OF THE AGENDA- AND FRAME-BUILDING
AND AGENDA-CUTTING PROCESSES IN THE TELEVISION INDUSTRY

Rita F. Colistra

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

Chapel Hill
2008

Approved by:

Chair: Donald L. Shaw

Reader: Lois A. Boynton

Reader: Anne Johnston

Reader: William B. Ware

Reader: James T. Hamilton

ABSTRACT

RITA F. COLISTRA: Reporter Perceptions of Influences on Media Content: A Structural Equation Model of the Agenda- and Frame-Building and Agenda-Cutting Processes in the Television Industry
(Under the direction of Dr. Donald L. Shaw)

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine through what forces and under what conditions the media are most likely to be influenced, and with what effect on news content. Specifically, this study asks how, how often, and under what conditions do external and internal forces attempt to influence the television media and their coverage, and to what effect are they successful at doing so? To answer this question, this dissertation uses a multi-level research approach to examine how extramedia, organizational, and within-media forces influence television news content and coverage decisions. The first stage uses structural equation modeling to test a comprehensive model of media influences and outcomes using original data from a national Web survey of television reporters.   Findings suggest that, based on reporters' perceptions, forces outside the media have a direct influence on organizational-level pressures. These pressures are then passed down to forces within the news organization, which then influence news content and coverage decisions. Organizational influences, including owners and top-level executives, affect coverage decisions both indirectly, as mediated through decision-makers working within the station itself, and directly. Both relationships were positive, suggesting that more reports of pressure from these sources result in higher levels of influence on content and coverage decisions. Market size also affects reporters' perceptions of influences, as respondents from *smaller*

markets perceive *more* instances of pressures from Extramedia sources, as well as *more* accounts of Organizational and Within-Media pressures. These relationships ultimately result in *more* instances of overall influences on content.

The second stage of the study examines the strength of the three indicators of extramedia influences (advertising, public relations, and political) and the three measures of organizational influences (owner/executive, economic, and staff) in predicting both influences on news coverage decisions and instances of agenda cutting. The findings offer insight for scholars, journalists, advertising and public relations professionals, media policymakers, and those involved in media ownership and economics. The study also attempts to advance theory with the development and expansion of agenda cutting, and by updating agenda- and frame-building and social control of the newsroom literature.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The mass media are an integral part of our everyday lives. With the advent and

proliferation of new technologies that make information more accessible, such as portable

Internet and e-mail devices, the media have become ingrained into our daily routines. In fact,

Americans spend more time using media, such as reading newspapers, listening to the radio,

surfing the Internet, and watching television, than any other activity except for breathing. [1]

And media use is projected to increase in 2008. [2]

Although new media technologies have surfaced over the years, none is as prevalent

as television. TV has been a popular medium among audiences since its official debut in the

late 1940s and 1950s. Since then, the number of people using it as their primary media

source has increased dramatically, and figures remain strong today. Data from the U.S.

Census Bureau's Statistical Abstract indicate that, in 2008, Americans are expected to spend

approximately 1,704 hours watching TV, which averages to almost five hours a day. This

figure is up from 1,502 TV hours at the beginning of the millennium. [3] Television is also the

---

[1] Stephen Ohlemacher, "Report: Americans Media Use Rising," *Guardian (London) Unlimited*, December 15, 2006, http://www.guardian.co.uk/uslatest/story/0,,-6282121,00.html (accessed December 16, 2006). *Note:* These findings were reported in a December 2006 *Guardian* article citing data released by the U.S. Census Bureau's Statistical Abstracts during the same period.

[2] Statistical Abstract of the United States, "Table 1098. Media Usage and Consumer Spending: 2000 to 2010," *U.S. Census Bureau*, January 10, 2008, http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/tables/08s1098.pdf (accessed March 1, 2008).

[3] Ibid.

most popular medium for obtaining the news of the day. A Harris Poll conducted in January 2006 revealed that 77% of adults reported watching local broadcast news several times a week or daily. The figure for network broadcast or cable news was only slightly lower with 71%.[4]

 With audiences devoting so much of their attention to television news, it is important to examine what is being aired on these broadcasts. Perhaps more significant, however, is how these news topics and stories came to be chosen, or not chosen, for broadcast in the first place. What forces, both internal and external, were involved in the news-decision process? Did owners or top-level executives suggest a particular story to cover or emphasize? Were public relations practitioners involved in the particular "spin" or angle taken on a certain topic? Did newsroom management influence a reporter's decision of *if* and *how* he/she would cover that event? Or, did advertisers exert pressure on the news organization to avoid covering a particular story because the coverage could be harmful to its company's image or profits? All are important questions that should be asked regarding news coverage. This is especially true in today's media world, as news workers are continually faced with competing loyalties from both within and outside their organizations. With increased bottom-line pressures, these types of potential influences on news content decisions are even more evident—especially in the broadcast industry where most stations' revenues derive from advertising.[5]

---

[4]"Seven in 10 U.S. Adults Say They Watch Broadcast News at Least Several Times a Week," *Harris Interactive*, February 24, 2006, http://harrisinteractive.com/harris_poll/printerfriend/index.asp?PID=644 (accessed on November 27, 2006).

[5]Pamela J. Shoemaker and Stephen D. Reese, *Mediating the Message: Theories of Influences on Mass Media Content*, 2d ed. (White Plains, NY: Longman Publishers, 1996), 267.

While many studies have centered on how media content may affect audiences, fewer have taken a step back to consider who or what is influencing the media's decisions. Influences on news content and coverage decisions may consist of three main processes: agenda building, frame building, and agenda cutting. Briefly, *agenda building* concerns what forces are attempting to influence the news agenda. Shoemaker and Reese proposed their hierarchical model of influences depicting how the media's content may be influenced on different levels, ranging from micro to macro, from forces both within and outside of news organizations.[6] These forces of influence may also attempt to affect *how* a story, topic, issue, or event is covered. That is, they may try to influence the "spin" or angle of the story or the stance on an issue. Thus, these forces also attempt to influence how a news story is framed (*frame building*). Finally, journalists may also be pressured to *not* cover, or avoid covering, a particular story or issue. This little-studied process is known as *agenda cutting* and is further discussed in the chapter that follows.

Some researchers have pointed out that more knowledge is needed on how and by whom the media agenda is set.[7] Others have called for more evidence to increase our understanding of how and through what forces media frames are constructed.[8] Furthermore, few researchers have even delved into the area of how and why certain news items are simply kept off, or cut out of, the media agenda. Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine through what forces and under what conditions the media are most likely to be influenced and to what effect on news content. That is, how and under what conditions do external and

---

[6]Pamela J. Shoemaker and Stephen D. Reese, *Mediating the Message: Theories of Influences on Mass Media Content* (New York: Longman Publishing Group, 1991).

[7]Everett M. Rogers, James W. Dearing, and Dorine Bregman, "The Anatomy of Agenda-Setting Research," *The Journal of Communication* 43, no. 2 (spring 1993): 73.

[8]For example, see Dietram A. Scheufele, "Framing as a Theory of Media Effects," *Journal of Communication* 49 (winter 1999): 109.

internal forces attempt to influence the media and their coverage, and to what effect are they successful at doing so? Specifically, this research measured the potential outcomes of attempts at influencing coverage decisions and news content. Using aspects from Shoemaker and Reese's hierarchical model of influences, along with research and examples from agenda-building and framing literature, a comprehensive model of media influences and outcomes was tested using a survey of television reporters (See Figure 1.1—Theoretical Model of Influences on Media Content (IOMC)).
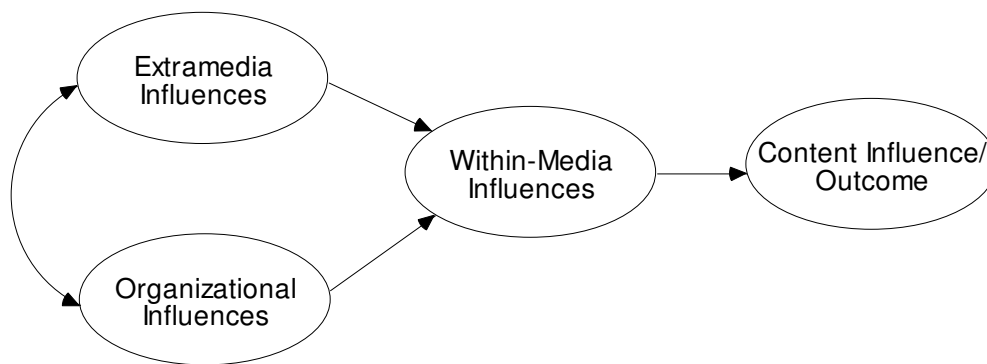
Figure 1.1 Theoretical Model of Influences on Media Content

This study's overall goal was to examine extramedia, organizational, and within-media forces that may influence news media content. As indicated in the IOMC model, this study proposed that extramedia and organizational influences on content decision effects/outcomes are mediated through within-media organization pressures.

In one part of the model, this study evaluated whether extramedia forces, such as advertiser, public relations, and political pressures, influence television news workers and their content decisions. Ample evidence of attempts and successes of extramedia forces influencing the media abound, especially in the area of advertising. For instance, Camel

cigarettes sponsored the "Camel News Caravan" on NBC in the 1950s. As a part of the agreement, NBC was not permitted to film any newscasts with shots of cigars or where a "No Smoking" sign was visible.[9] According to former NBC News President Reuven Frank in his book *Out of Thin Air,* "What Camel wanted Camel got."[10] Decades later, *Mother Jones*, a liberal magazine, published articles that linked cigarette smoking and cancer, although the staff thought it might lead to repercussions from their tobacco advertisers. Their concerns were well-founded, as the companies pulled their ads from the magazine.[11] *Ms.* magazine suffered similar consequences from Clairol after publishing a report on congressional hearings concerning hair dyes and their chemicals being absorbed through the skin, which may be carcinogenic. The company eventually changed its formulas but also pulled ads from the publication as a result of the reports.[12]

The study also examined organizational pressures, including ownership/executive and economic pressures, and their influence on content as mediated through the news organization (within-news organization influence). Organizational pressures, namely stemming from ownership issues, have attracted much attention from both professionals and academics. For example, NBC's *Saturday Night Live* ran a cartoon skit that criticized media ownership concentration and its effects on news content—including stories about General Electric (GE), the network's parent company. When NBC reran the episode months later, the

---

[9]Deborah Potter, "For Sale: Advertisers Make More Inroads on News," *American Journalism Review* 28, no. 2 (April/May 2006): 72.

[10]Reuvan Frank, *Out of Thin Air: The Brief and Wonderful Life of Network News* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), as cited in Potter, "For Sale: Advertisers Make More Inroads on News," 72.

[11]David Croteau and William Hoynes, *The Business of Media: Corporate Media and the Public Interest* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 2001), 180.

[12]Gloria Steinem, "Sex, Lies & Advertising," *Ms.* 1, no. 1 (July/August 1990): 18, http://www. uwc.edu/dept/wmsts/Faculty/steinem.htm (accessed Nov. 13, 2006).

cartoon segment was cut reportedly because it lacked comedic value.[13] According to an

editorial in *The Nation*, however, a source from the network reported that both NBC's

president and GE executives were displeased with the material.[14] Those writing and

producing entertainment pieces may not be the only group under pressure from owners and

top executives, as news workers may be feeling the heat as well. A 2000 survey conducted

by Pew Research Center and *Columbia Journalism Review* (CJR) found that 51% of local

journalists felt that corporate owners influence news organizations' decisions about which

stories to cover or emphasize "a great deal" or "a fair amount."[15]

The relationship between the extramedia and organizational levels of influence was

considered. Given the paucity of literature directly regarding the relationships between these

two levels within the context of the current study, the IOMC model simply implied that

changes at the extramedia level resulted in changes at the organizational level, and vice

versa. That is, no direct effects between these two independent variables were initially

proposed.

The hypothesized model additionally posited that the extramedia and organizational

influences on media content were mediated by pressures within media organizations. The

possible influences at this level included direct and indirect management pressures. For

example, newsroom managers may directly tell their staff to nix a certain story or to cover it

from a particular angle. Others may simply provide overt instructions of what types of

content should and should not be covered. These preferences, however, are not always so

---

[13]David Corn, "Saturday Night Censored," *The Nation*, 13 July 1998, 6; Croteau and Hoynes, *The Business of Media,* 175-176.

[14]Corn, "Saturday Night Censored," 6.

[15]"Self Censorship: How Often and Why," *The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press* (April 30, 2000), http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=39 (accessed on April 5, 2006).

obvious, and content decisions may be made due to more subtle pressures exerted on news

workers by management, owners, or top-level executives.[16] These subtle directions may

come in the form of indirect management signals, such as yawning at or making fun of a

story idea or simply not running or airing a reporter's story. Soon, these news workers are

socialized into the proper news routines with little or no direct form of correction, reprimand,

or instruction.[17]

To examine the type of influences just discussed, this study used a multistage

research approach of testing the overall model with its respective components, in addition to

evaluating specific relationships and outcomes within the model. Multiple techniques were

used at different stages to examine the influences and potential effects on media content

proposed in the study. First, an advanced multivariate statistical technique, Structural

Equation Modeling (SEM), was used to test the hypothesized model of influences and

outcomes. Specifically, the study evaluated extramedia and organizational influences with

(1) each other, as indicated by the double-headed arrows, (2) within-media influences, such

as direct and indirect management pressures, and (3) influences/effects on content, such as

levels of agenda building, frame building, and agenda cutting, as mediated through "within-

media influences."

The second phase of the study involved the use of correlation analysis and multiple

regression to assess the plausibility, strength, and direction of specific relationships between

variables that were not directly presented in the model. Separate analyses were used for this

---

[16]For example, see Theodore L. Glasser, David S. Allen, and S. Elizabeth Blanks, "The Influence of
Chain Ownership on News Play: A Case Study," *Journalism Quarterly* 66 (autumn 1989): 613.

[17]For example, see Warren Breed, "Social Control in the Newsroom: A Functional Analysis," *Social
Forces* 33, no. 4 (May 1955): 326-335.

stage because the SEM technique in the first phase of the study provides an overall evaluation of the proposed model, but it does not assess relationships that are unspecified.

This research should be useful to both media scholars and journalists alike because it will help them to better recognize how and under what conditions influences on news content are likely to occur. Findings from this study could also serve as the starting point for creating innovative newsroom policy and guidelines on how to deal with such situations of attempted influence when they arise. At the very least, they should facilitate newsroom discussions about these issues. Influences on news content has sparked ethical debates regarding competing loyalties to readers/viewers, advertisers, and stockholders, to name a few. These discussions are especially important today with even more concern over the bottom line due to increased competition and advanced technology.

On the other side of the coin, this study may be valuable to those working in public relations, advertising, and the government. Findings shed light on the effectiveness of their efforts and under what conditions (e.g., market size, smaller staffs) their endeavors are more likely to prove fruitful. Thus, this research may help professionals in these areas alter their communication strategies accordingly to ensure that they are using their resources most efficiently.

The findings from this project also provide valuable information to policymakers in their decisions concerning issues such as ownership (de)regulation, political involvement, and advertising. With the major deregulation from the Telecommunications Act of 1996 and the debates that surrounded the Federal Communication Commission's (FCC) reevaluation of the proposed relaxation of ownership rules in 2003, a comprehensive model of potential

influences on media content may be useful in making decisions about industry regulation guidelines.

Finally, this study helps to advance agenda-building and frame-building literature, and, more importantly, it aids in the development and expansion of agenda cutting, which has been afforded little to no attention from scholars beyond an abundance of anecdotal examples of its occurrence. This area, in particular, should be of interest to those studying political communication, propaganda, advertising, public relations and strategic communication, and beyond.

In the next chapter, literature involving sources of extramedia influences is reviewed, followed by a fairly detailed examination of pressures at the organizational level. Influences within news organizations are then discussed, and examples from academic studies and surveys are incorporated to provide a better understanding of the forces involved at this level. Although this stage is not explicitly outlined in Shoemaker and Reese's hierarchical model, this construct draws upon ideas from the "media routines" level but offers more personalized newsroom information, which is explained in greater detail in its respective section. Finally, a detailed explanation of the potential influences and outcomes on content and coverage decisions, the main dependent variable of the study, is provided. The potential influences on content are instances of agenda building, frame building, and agenda cutting.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Shoemaker and Reese have pointed out that media content can be influenced on

different levels. Gatekeepers exist at each level, and they allow certain news items to pass

through to the next stage toward broadcast or publication while others are filtered out of

consideration. The idea of gatekeeping has it roots in the field of psychology. German

psychologist Kurt Lewin first coined the term during his research on social change in times

of food shortage after World War II.[18] He found that food passed through gates using

different channels with gatekeepers selecting or rejecting the items that were then delivered

to the table.[19] Lewin later suggested that this "gatekeeping" theory could be applied to news

items moving through different paths of communication.[20]

David Manning White took this advice and was the first researcher to apply this

theory of gates and channels to the media.[21] His research focused on "Mr. Gates," a

newspaper wire editor, and the forces that led to his selection of stories. White found that

---

[18]Kurt Lewin, "Frontiers in Group Dynamics: Concept, Method and Reality in Science; Social Equilibria and Social Change," *Human Relations* 1 (June 1947): 5-40; Kurt Lewin, "Frontiers in Group Dynamics: Channels of Group Life; Social Planning and Action Research," *Human Relations* 1 (November 1947): 143-53.

[19]Kurt Lewin, *Field Theory in Social Science: Selected Theoretical Papers*, ed. Dorwin Cartwright (NY: Harper & Brothers, 1951), 176.

[20]Ibid, 187.

[21]David Manning White, "The 'Gate Keeper': A Case Study in the Selection of News," *Journalism Quarterly* 27 (fall 1950): 383-90.

"Mr. Gates'" decisions to select and reject stories were affected by his personal beliefs and by newsroom routines.

With these studies of gatekeeping and the "control" of news flow in mind, Shoemaker and Reese developed the hierarchical model of influences, as briefly outlined earlier. They argue that media choice of the presentation of news items operate on different levels, ranging from macro to micro, to influence the content that is eventually received by the audience. The levels of influence are ideological, extramedia, organizational, media routines, and individual.[22] The current study and proposed model draw from particular levels of Shoemaker and Reese's study, along with aspects from agenda building, framing, and agenda cutting. Only those influence levels and potential effects on content assessed in the current study are addressed in the review of literature that follows in order to provide justification for the specific goals of this project. The pressure sources included in this study are extramedia, organizational, and within-media influences. The potential influences/outcomes on content are levels of agenda building, frame building, and agenda cutting. The following sections explain each of the influence levels and the possible effects on news media content.

Extramedia Influences

Potential extramedia levels of influence include advertisers, public relations efforts, government and political, and interest groups. Studies have relied on this level of analysis in an attempt to get to the first step in the gatekeeping and agenda-building processes.[23] Berkowitz argued that the relationship between journalists and news sources should be

---

[22]Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message*, 54; Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message*, 2d ed., 64.

[23]Dan Berkowitz, "TV News Sources and News Channels: A Study in Agenda-Building," *Journalism Quarterly* 64 (autumn 1987): 508-13; Judy VanSlyke Turk, "Information Subsidies and Influence," *Public Relations Review* 11, no. 3 (1985): 10-25.

examined in addition to the practice of newsgathering when considering the agenda-building process.[24] The term "sources" not only refers to individuals associated with an event or issue, such as a witness of an accident or a prosecutor associated with a legal case, but may also include organization-based information, such as press releases, press conferences, video news releases (VNRs), and official proceedings. Gandy referred to these latter sources as "information subsidies" and stressed their importance in the agenda-building process.[25] The media may use these sources verbatim or incorporate them into their own coverage. Without proper fact checking and other journalistic measures to ensure accuracy and balance, the media may be helping these sources build and set their own agendas with the public, either inadvertently or intentionally. Thus, the relationship between journalists and different extramedia organizational sources is important to examine because researchers can then determine if they are simply affiliated to build one another's agenda.[26] That is, in exchange for the source providing information to the media organization, especially if the news entity is understaffed or if there is a lull in newsworthy issues or events, the journalist agrees to report on topics that the source deems important—in other words, items provided by these information subsidies and the organizations that prepare them. To further examine extramedia influences, three specific sources of pressure are considered: advertiser, public relations, and political/government.

---

[24]Berkowitz, "TV News Sources and News Channels," 513.

[25]Oscar H. Gandy, *Beyond Agenda Setting: Information Subsidies and Public Policy* (Norwood, N.J.: Ablex Publishing, 1982).

[26]Rita F. Counts-Colistra, "Media Concentration of Ownership and its Effects on Editorial Page Vigor of West Virginia Daily Newspapers," (Master's thesis, West Virginia University, 2004), 8.

Gloria Steinem, editor of *Ms.* magazine, reported that she once attended a press lunch for a Soviet official. After much banter, the official asked the group how to control the media more subtly. Steinem simply replied, "Advertising."[27] Based on the evidence in both trade and academic literature, she may not be exaggerating.

A number of examples concerning advertiser influences on the media have emerged over the years. A 1992 study found that more than 89% of the 150 newspaper editors surveyed said "advertisers had pulled ads or tried to influence stories," with most of the pressure appearing to come from automobile dealers.[28] One year before, an *American Journalism Review* article reported that angry auto dealers pulled television ads after the station aired stories concerning dangerous vehicles, an unhappy customer, and tips on saving money when buying a new car.[29]

Because advertisers know that the media rely on them for revenue, they may sometimes assume that they have special access to the news[30] or may lay out guidelines of what type of content that is to be run (or not run) in the same issue/segment of their advertisements.[31] Several examples of these privileged guidelines have surfaced in the magazine industry. According to Croteau and Hoynes, Chrysler Corporation expressed that "each and every issue [of the magazines in which it advertised] that carries Chrysler

---

[27]Steinem, "Sex, Lies & Advertising."

[28]Peg Masterson, "Many Editors Report Advertiser Pressure: Most Have Had Ads Pulled Due to Stories," *Advertising Age* 64, no. 2 (January 1993): 22.

[29]Adam Platt, "Angry Dealers Pull TV Ads," *American Journalism Review* 13 (September 1991), http://www.ajr.org/article.asp?id=2095 (accessed on Nov. 13, 2006).

[30]Ben H. Bagdikian, *The Media Monopoly*, 5th ed. (Boston: Beacon, 1997).

[31]For example, see Croteau and Hoynes, *The Business of Media,* 179; Steinem, "Sex, Lies & Advertising.".

advertising requires a written summary outlining major themes/articles appearing in upcoming issues."[32] Furthermore, the company was to be informed in advance if any content covered "sexual, political, social issues or any editorial that might be construed as provocative or offensive."[33] Steinem also spoke about advertiser demands at *Ms.* Proctor & Gamble, for example, insisted that its products' advertisements should not run in "any issue that included any material on gun control, abortion, the occult, cults, or the disparagement of religion. Caution was also demanded in any issue covering sex or drugs, even for educational purposes."[34]

In addition to the anecdotal evidence, scholars have also found support for instances of advertiser influence on content. Media critics, such as Ben Bagdikian and Robert McChesney, argue that audiences are gathered not to be informed, but to be sold to advertisers. Therefore, Bagdikian contends, a few large corporations win while the public loses.[35] Edwin Baker also discussed how media organizations sell audiences to advertisers (instead of news products to audiences) in *Media, Markets, and Democracy.*[36] In the current media market, managers are faced with multiple loyalties, such as to viewers, stockholders, and advertisers. Baker, however, asserted that influence or favor tends to go toward (1) the larger purchaser; (2) the purchaser with the most knowledge as to how the media can serve its needs; and (3) the purchaser most sensitive to how the media can affects its interests. In

---

[32]Russ Baker, "The Squeeze," *Columbia Journalism Review* 36, no. 3 (September/October 1997): 30; Croteau and Hoynes, *The Business of Media*, 179.

[33]Ibid.

[34]Steinem, "Sex, Lies & Advertising."

[35]Ben H. Bagdikian, *The Media Monopoly*, 3d ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990).

[36]C. Edwin Baker, *Media, Markets, and Democracy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 14.

other words, the advertiser—not the audience. As Altschull put it, "The press is the piper, and the tune the piper plays is composed by those who pay the piper."[37]

According to Croteau and Hoynes, advertisers have "substantial influence over what is and is not emphasized in the media," and traditionally, this influence is "fairly subtle and indirect."[38] The authors give examples of how the media alert entities, such as airlines and oil companies, if the news content could potentially present them in an unfavorable light. For instance, if there is an oil-spill story or an airplane crash, the companies may be offered the chance to reschedule ads.[39] On the other hand, pressure from advertisers may be more direct, especially in recent years.

Soley and Craig surveyed editors at daily newspapers concerning advertiser pressures. They found that almost 90% claimed that advertisers had tried to influence the types of stories being covered while 90% reported that advertisers attempted to influence content through economic pressure. Meanwhile, 70% said that "advertisers tried to kill" stories at their papers.[40] According to the authors, these findings suggest that "advertiser pressure on newspapers is much greater than most textbooks suggest."[41] Although the high amount of pressure is evident from the findings, 85% of these editors claimed that their newspapers still carried stories that are critical of advertisers, while a fairly high number (37%) reported that they have actually bowed to advertiser pressures. Despite these findings,

---

[37]J. Herbert Altschull, *Agents of Power: The Role of News Media in Human Affairs* (New York: Longman, 1984), 254.

[38]Croteau and Hoynes, *The Business of Media*, 179.

[39]Ibid.

[40]Lawrence C. Soley and Robert L. Craig, "Advertising Pressures on Newspapers: A Survey," *Journal of* Advertising 21, no. 4 (December 1992): 6.

[41]Ibid.

Colistra found that editors representing 44% of daily newspaper readership said that newsroom ethical *discussions* concerning pressures from advertisers, such as "blurbs," "business-office musts," or pressure to run or keep things out of the paper, occurred "less than once a year or never."[42]

Falling in line with Soley and Craig's work, Hays and Reisner uncovered similar instances of advertiser pressures in their survey of farm magazine journalists. They found that 62% of those surveyed reported "receiving threats to withdraw advertising from advertisers displeased by editorial copy" while 48% said that advertisers had actually withdrawn advertising from their publications.[43] Moreover, 65% claimed to have received phone calls from advertising and public relations representatives "pushing products or copy" and reported that they deemed such pressures as effective.[44] Although the study is limited because it deals with niche publications from a controlled sample of American Agricultural Editors Association (AAEA) members, it still has merit because studies involving more generalist media have produced similar findings.[45]

Shoemaker and Reese have pointed out that radio and television stations are more susceptible to advertiser pressures than print media because they are more

---

[42]Rita F. Colistra, "Financial Conflicts of Interest," in *Newspaper Ethics in the New Century: A Report to the American Society of Newspaper Editors*, ed. Philip Meyer (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2006), 74-75. *Note:* Editorial matter controlled by the business office on behalf of advertisers in the news columns is commonly referred to as "blurbs" or "business-office musts."

[43]Robert G. Hays and Ann E. Reisner, "Feeling the Heat from Advertisers: Farm Magazine Writers and Ethical Pressures," *Journalism Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (winter 1990): 939.

[44]Ibid.

[45]For example, see Soley and Craig, "Advertising Pressures on Newspapers."

sensitive to profit needs and rely on advertising sources for revenue.[46] Despite this

claim, Price's study of ownership and advertising suggested that advertiser pressures

on television may not be as extensive as one might think—at least on the national

level. She surveyed all correspondents working at the three network news station,

CNN, and PBS and asked about ownership and advertiser pressures. Price found that

only 7% of the respondents mentioned even a rare influence.[47] This figure may be

low, however, because only *national* news correspondents were surveyed.

Still, other research supporting Shoemaker and Reese's contentions suggests

otherwise, especially with regard to local stations. A study by the Project for

Excellence in Journalism, an organization affiliated with the Columbia School of

Journalism, surveyed local television news directors and found that more than 30%

reported "being pressured to kill negative stories or do positive ones about

advertisers."[48] In the same vein, Just, Levine, and Regan found that 53% of the 118

local news directors surveyed alleged the exact same types of pressures. This figure

reflects an increase from a smaller-scale survey the authors conducted just a year

earlier, suggesting the problem may be getting worse. Just and her colleagues noted

that "the findings and comments [from the survey] raise questions about the

---

[46]Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message*, 2d ed., 267.

[47] Cindy J. Price, "Interfering Owners or Meddling Advertisers?: How Network Television News Correspondents Feel about Ownership and Advertiser Influence on News Stories," *The Journal of Media Economics* 16, no. 3 (2003): 183.

[48]David Hatch, "Local News Execs Feeling Ad Pressure," *Electronic Media* 19, no. 50 (December 2001): 12.

journalistic independence of local television news."[49] Tuchman made a similar point

in 1978 when she asserted that news workers in the television industry occasionally

link advertiser preferences to their own news judgments based on organizational

directives.[50]

Additional research provides further support for these claims. A 1999 Pew

survey found that just over one-third of staffers in local media were concerned with

advertiser pressures a "great deal" or a "fair amount."[51] A 2000 survey, however,

showed an increase in concerns about advertisers, as 43% of local journalists thought

that advertising concerns influenced news organizations' decisions about what stories

to cover or emphasize "a great deal" or "a fair amount."[52]

Such findings appear to indicate a growing problem, particularly in the television

industry. One anchor-producer from Price's study noted:

> Our advertisers pretty much run our 30-minute newscasts….we have a
> sponsored health package that must run every Monday, Wednesday, and
> Friday…. What ends up happening is we give the two minutes to the
> sponsored package and cut time from our lead stories…. We are sacrificing
> content for cash.[53]

---

[49]Marion Just and Rosalind Levin with Kathleen Regan, "News for Sale: Half of Stations Report
Sponsor Pressure on News Decisions," Supplement to *Columbia Journalism Review* 40, no. 4
(November/December 2001): 2.
.

[50]Gayle Tuchman, *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality*, (New York: Free Press,
1978).

[51]"Business and Public Pressures: Striking the Balance, Audience Interest, Business Pressures and
Journalists' Values," *The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press* (1999), http://people-
press.org/reports/display.php3?PageID=317 (accessed on November 13, 2006).

[52]"Self Censorship: How Often and Why."

[53]Price, "Interfering Owners or Meddling Advertisers," 181.

Audiences may be catching on, as a 1998 Radio and Television News Directors Foundation (RTNDA) survey showed that more than 80% of the public respondents believed that advertisers have an "undue influence" on editorial content.[54]

Public Relations Pressures

Another potential source of outside influence on the media is public relations pressures. One of the main goals of public relations practitioners is to create and maintain a positive image in the eyes of the public over time. To accomplish this goal, those in the field use the media to communicate their messages to the masses. If they are successful in getting their messages placed in the media, "they influence the media agenda, which can in turn influence public opinion and the public agenda."[55] This process of influencing the media agenda is known as agenda building. The messages take the form of what Gandy called "information subsidies" and consist of communication pieces such as press releases, public service announcements (PSAs), video news releases (VNRs), press conferences, and official proceedings, to name a few.[56] Practitioners provide information subsidies to the media in an attempt to garner media coverage on behalf of their clients in order to reach their target audiences.[57] In other words, they attempt to build the media agenda to, in turn, influence the public agenda.

---

[54]Al Tompkins, "Balancing Business Pressure and Journalism Values," *Poynteronline*, April 9, 2002, http://www.poynter.org/content/content_view.asp?id=3806 (accessed November 25, 2005); see also Lou Prato, "Punishing the Ethically Challenged," *American Journalism Review* 21, no. 7 (September 1999): 86.

[55]Patricia A. Curtin, "Reevaluating Public Relations Information Subsidies: Market-Driven Journalism and Agenda-Building Theory and Practice," *Journal of Public Relations Research* 11, no. 1 (1999): 54.

[56]Gandy, *Beyond Agenda Setting*.

[57]Turk, "Information Subsidies and Influence," 12.

Information subsidies from public relations practitioners are provided at no cost to the media. Typical news stories produced by news organizations involve expenses, including equipment costs and worker salaries. Thus, media entities facing budget cuts and bottom-line pressures, or simply those with a small number of staff, may be more willing to use these subsidies to fill their news holes at a low cost.[58] Regardless, news organizations tend to use information subsidies, even if solely for generating story ideas.

In his 1976 study of public relations influence on environmental coverage, Sachsman found that more than 50% of the stories about the environment at the newspapers under study were from news releases.[59] A decade later, Turk's findings were similar and indicated that newspapers used 51% of information subsidies received by government public information officers. Of those used, 48% resulted in the publication of separate news stories, thus providing support for the agenda-building hypothesis.[60] Another project around the same time found that 90% of assignment editors reported using news releases to develop stories.[61] Furthermore, Sallot and Johnson's more recent study in 2006 found that journalists estimated that 44% of media content is influenced by public relations practitioners.[62]

[58]Gandy, *Beyond Agenda Setting*; Curtin, "*Reevaluating Public Relations Information Subsidies,*" 55; Dan Berkowitz and Douglas B. Adams, "Information Subsidy and Agenda Building in Local Television News," *Journalism Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (winter 1990): 724.

[59]David B. Sachsman, "Public Relations Influence on Coverage of Environment in San Francisco Area," *Journalism Quarterly* 53, no. 1 (spring 1976): 54-60.

[60]Turk, "Information Subsidies and Influence," 18; Judy VanSlyke Turk, "Information Subsidies and Media Content: A Study of Public Relations Influence on the News," *Journalism Monographs* 100 (1986): 23.

[61]Greg Lagan, "The Assignment Editor: A Regional Look at Beliefs, Characteristics and Functions," (Master's thesis, Iowa State University, 1984) as cited in Eric A. Abbott and Lynn T. Brassfield, "Comparing Decisions on Releases by TV and Newspaper Gatekeepers," *Journalism Quarterly* 66 (winter 1989): 853-56.

[62]Lynne M. Sallot and Elizabeth A. Johnson, "Investigating Relationships Between Journalists and Public Relations Practitioners: Working Together to Set, Frame and Build the Public Agenda, 1991-2004," *Public Relations Review* 32, no. 2 (June 2006): 151.

While the previously mentioned studies concern public relations material used by newspapers, some evidence suggests that information subsidy use may be even more prevalent in the television industry[63] because of more severe economic constraints.[64] In their 1989 study comparing decisions on news releases by television and newspaper gatekeepers, Abbott and Brassfield found that small TV stations were more likely to use releases, with a 59% acceptance rate, while both small and large newspapers rejected the most (33.5% and 24%, respectively).[65] This finding was somewhat surprising since, according to the authors, previous research indicated that newspaper gatekeepers were more likely to accept releases because of larger news holes. A year later, Berkowitz and Adams' study involving only a TV station found that fewer than 25% of the information subsidies were retained. Those that were used at this local station were mainly from nonprofit organizations and interest groups, despite the higher numbers received from government and business sources.[66]

Although studies indicate that subsidies are indeed accepted, albeit at different rates, literature suggests a strained relationship among public relations practitioners and journalists that may lead some news workers to exhibit reluctance at using pieces provided by these sources.[67] This relationship may be due to journalists' suspicions of public relations

---

[63]For example, see Abbott and Brassfield, "Comparing Decisions on Releases by TV and Newspaper Gatekeepers," 853-856.

[64]Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message*, 2d ed., 267.

[65]Abbott and Brassfield, "Comparing Decisions on Releases by TV and Newspaper Gatekeepers," 855-856. Note: The percentages were calculated by the current author using raw figures provided in a table in the article.

[66]Berkowitz and Adams, "Information Subsidies and Agenda-Building in Local Television News," 723-731.

[67]Glen T. Cameron, Lynne M. Sallot, and Patricia A. Curtin, "Public Relations and the Production of News: A Critical Review and a Theoretical Framework," in B. R. Burleson (Ed.), *Communication Yearbook* 20 (1997): 111-155.

professionals' practices, as they may view them as simply trying to promote their own agendas by only presenting their client in a positive light while withholding other pertinent information. In their 1984 study of how public relations professionals and editors view each other, Kopenhaver, Martinson, and Ryan found that practitioners gave a fairly accurate view of editors. Editors, on the other hand, portrayed practitioners more negatively. Yet, the authors found that practitioners and journalists shared many of the opinions on news values.[68] Evidence, however, suggests that this relationship may be changing—at least a little. Sallot and Johnson examined interviews of journalists regarding public relations practitioners conducted from 1991 to 2004.[69] They found that 45% viewed their relationships as positive or very positive. Moreover, journalists valued public relations more in 2002-2004 than in the previous years under study. Still, a small percentage, 18%, of the journalist-practitioner relationship interviews were coded as a "love/hate" relationship or a "necessary evil," and findings suggested that these sentiments remained fairly constant in the 1991-1996 and the 2002-2004 time periods.[70]

Some of this animosity may be attributed to the controversy that has surfaced regarding the use and misuse of VNRs by media organizations. They have been the subject of major debates in the media world, especially in the United States. Similar to print releases, VNRs are public relations tools typically aimed at promoting products, companies, services, agendas, viewpoints, or people/groups. These releases are created to look like

---

[68]Lillian Lodge Kopenhaver, David L. Martinson, and Michael Ryan, "How Public Relations Practitioners and Editors in Florida View Each Other," *Journalism Quarterly* 61, no. 4 (winter 1984): 861-865, 884.

[69]Sallot and Johnson, "Investigating Relationships Between Journalists and Public Relations Practitioners," 151-159.

[70]Ibid, 154.

actual news stories and are distributed to television stations for broadcast at no charge. They are typically created and provided by public relations firms, government or corporate agencies, or interest groups with the hopes of garnering media coverage and, thus, influencing the audience. In some instances, stations run them without revealing that the video segments are produced by outside sponsors, agencies, or corporations. Thus, the public may not be able to distinguish between a VNR and a "real" news story put together by a station's news team. So what is the problem with TV stations using these pieces without disclosing their origins? A whole lot, according to an extensive study completed by the Center for Media and Democracy (CMD).

First, and most obviously, "viewers have a right to know where their news comes from."[71] Generally speaking, the audience tends to tune in to news sources that they can trust and depend on. For example, Walter Cronkite was considered the most trusted man in America, and viewers knew what to expect when they watched his newscast. According to Hamilton, this reliance on a particular brand of news has led to an increased value of, and higher salaries for, top television news anchors.[72] In fact, top anchor salaries in 1999 ranged from $7 million for Tom Brokaw and Dan Rather to $8.75 million for Peter Jennings, a figure much higher than famed anchor Harry Reasoner's 1970 salary of $859,000 (in the equivalent of 1999 dollars). News magazine anchor and talk show host Barbara Walters

---

[71]Diane Farsetta and Daniel Price, "Fake TV News: Widespread and Undisclosed--A Multimedia Report on Television Newsrooms' Use of Material Provided by PR Firms on Behalf of Paying Clients," *Center for Media and Democracy* (April 6, 2006), 33, http://www.prwatch.org/pdfs/NFNPDFExt6.pdf (accessed November 1, 2006).

[72]James T. Hamilton, *All the News that's Fit to Sell: How the Market Transforms Information into News* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), 215-234. This chapter offers an excellent account of the top TV news anchor as a branding mechanism for stations and the increase in salaries over the years.

outranked them all in 2000 with a salary of $10 million.[73] If viewers trust these particular

anchors and their respective programs, they are more likely to trust most segments that are

aired within them, including VNRs. If the sources of these pieces are not disclosed, the

audience may not be able to determine that the piece has been produced by another entity,

such as a corporation or government agency.[74] Thus, viewers may automatically trust this

information without the scrutiny that they might normally apply to "paid" materials simply

because they are accustomed to trusting the content broadcast by their particular program.

Second, Farsetta and Price point out that nondisclosure is clearly against the ethical

guidelines set forth by the RTNDA. The guidelines for the use of non-editorial video and

audio state: "News managers and producers should clearly disclose the origin of information

and label all material provided by corporate or other non-editorial sources."[75] The guidelines

give disclosure examples of using a logo image of the organization that is responsible for the

piece or a providing a simple acknowledgment from the anchor, such as "This video was

provided by…." In Farsetta and Price's project for the CMD, however, all 77 stations under

study "actively disguised the sponsored content to make it appear to be their own

reporting."[76] The RTNDA guidelines also indicate that executives should ask themselves

---

[73]Ibid, 219.

[74]Public relations-type of information from government agencies is especially important to distinguish from traditional public relations because of the guidelines set forth in the 1913 Gillett Amendment, noting "Appropriated funds may not be used to pay a publicity expert unless specifically appropriated for that purpose." A 1972 Public Law reaffirmed the Amendment and prohibited government spending on "publicity or propaganda purposes designed to support or defeat legislation pending before the Congress" (see Public Law 92-351, Section 609(a), July 13, 1972). Although the Amendment and Law are not outright bans on government public relations, professionals currently working in this capacity are identified by other titles, including *public affairs officer*, *public information officer,* and *press secretary.*

[75]Farsetta and Price, "Fake TV News," 33; "RTNDA Guidelines for Use of Non-Editorial Video and Audio," *RTNDA* (April 2005), http://www.rtnda.org/foi/finalvnr.shtml (accessed November 1, 2006).

[76]Farsetta and Price, "Fake TV News," 4.

"whether more than one side is included, if there is a financial agenda to releasing the story, and if the viewers…would believe this is work done locally by [their] team."[77] Furthermore, station executives should determine whether they are able "to shoot this video or capture this audio itself, or get it through regular editorial channels, such as its network feed service."[78] Farsetta and Price's study, however, showed that "stations failed to balance the clients' messages with independently gathered footage or basic journalistic research" in a majority of the cases.[79]

The increased attention on the TV industry for the reported misuse of VNRs may leave television journalists and executives somewhat chagrined with the very firms, agencies, and people who create and provide these pieces to their stations—perhaps because they have been "busted" for running this information without disclosing the source. These feelings of animosity may exist despite the fact that these outside professionals are simply doing their jobs of promoting their clients, and, in most cases, the source of the VNRs is clearly indicated when given to the station. In fact, Farsetta and Price's study for the CMD found that the broadcast public relations firms "clearly and accurately disclosed the client and funding information each time" out of the hundreds of pieces analyzed for the project.[80] Still, the researchers point out that some of the information "may not be relayed to local stations when a network-distributed or syndicated segment incorporates a VNR."[81] In some cases,

---

[77]"RTNDA Guidelines for Use of Non-Editorial Video and Audio."

[78]Ibid.

[79]Farsetta and Price, "Fake TV News," 4.

[80]Ibid, 34-35.

[81]Ibid, 35.

the journalists themselves may not be aware that they are running these pieces or, in at least one instance, participating in their very production.

In May 2003, the *New York Times* uncovered a deal between two respected journalists and WJMK, a video production company based out of Florida.[82] Walter Cronkite and CNN's Aaron Brown both signed up to host a video series titled "American Medical Review," which ran on PBS. The problem was that the show was disguised as a newscast and was sponsored by corporations, such as drug manufacturers and health-care companies. The corporate sponsors, who paid around $15,000 to have their products featured in the videos, were trying to make their series more credible by hiring trusted journalists to host the show. And they succeeded for several years with *60 Minutes'* Morley Safer as their host. Once the *New York Times* caught wind of the situation, both journalists called off the deal, and Safer sent letters to WJMK demanding that the company stop using videotapes of his appearances.[83]

As the literature shows, VNRs are public relations tools used to garner media coverage to promote a client's agenda, services, or products, among other things. As evidenced from Farsetta and Price's extensive study, the broadcast public relations firms and other sources have been successful at getting their pieces run in the media. In fact, the 77 stations under study aired the VNRs "as is" more than 30% of the time, and in 100% of the cases, the stations made the pieces appear like it was their own reporting.[84] Thus, the organizations that provided the information, and the clients that they represent, were reasonably successful in influencing the media's news agenda.

---

[82]Melody Peterson, "Walter Cronkite Backs Away From Sponsored Video Deal," *New York Times*, 9 May 2003, 4 (C).

[83]Deborah Potter, "Maybe It's Not So Obvious," *American Journalism Review* 25, no. 5 (June 2003): 64; Peterson, "Walter Cronkite Backs Away From Sponsored Video Deal," 4 (C).

[84]Farsetta and Price, "Fake TV News," 4.

Political/Government Pressures

In addition to advertising and public relations pressures, political influences on the media also exist. Although most people tend to think of political and government influence specifically around election time—especially with regard to campaign advertising—other types of pressure may also occur, although perhaps in a more subtle and indirect manner. This somewhat hidden type of pressure may help explain the dearth of academic literature covering instances of politicians and government officials attempting to influence news coverage.

Those in the government can influence media content through interviews that are off the record, backgrounders, or news leaks[85]—all information sources that Berkowitz has referred to as "informal" news channels.[86] Like the public relations materials previously discussed, these sources are considered information subsidies. According to Shoemaker and Reese, these channels "can be used very effectively to set the agenda for the news media— something that U.S. presidents do not fail to attempt."[87] For example, Ponder's study of the first presidential press corps found that President William McKinley achieved favorable press coverage by holding press briefings on a regular basis and by providing reporters with advanced copies of his statements and speeches, thus making their work easier by subsidizing the information.[88] Therefore, the President and the White House were able to build the media's news agenda by simplifying the news-gathering process. Furthermore, they were

---

[85]Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message*, 2d ed., 205.

[86]Berkowitz, "TV News Sources and News Channels," 510.

[87]Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message*, 2d ed., 205-206.

[88]Stephen E. Ponder, "The President Makes News: William McKinley and the First Presidential Press Corps, 1897-1901," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (fall 1994): 823-836.

more able to "easily win the framing contest"[89] by making certain that the subsidies provided

contained the main messages and frames that they wanted relayed to the public while leaving

out and drawing attention away from those that they did not want brought to light.[90]

According to Pan and Kosicki, "framing an issue is more a strategic means to attract more

supporters, to mobilize collections, to expand actors' realm of influences, and to increase

their chances of winning."[91] This "winning" can be thought of as winning a desired amount,

type, and frame of media coverage; public support; or support from others in government.

Berkowitz provided support for McKinley's type of strategy, as he found that 71% of

network and 75% of local news stories relied upon "routine news channels" such as press

conferences, official proceedings, and press releases.[92] Moreover, television news used these

types of channels more often than newspapers.

Instead of simply accommodating the press to influence coverage, sometimes

pressures can be more direct.[93] According to Reeves, President Kennedy addressed

newspaper publishers at an American Newspaper Publishers Association meeting in 1961

just as the U.S. was going to war with Viet Nam. During his speech, Kennedy stressed

---

[89]Zhongdang Pan and Gerald M. Kosicki, "Framing as a Strategic Action in Public Deliberation," in *Framing Public Life: Perspectives on Media and our Understanding of the Social World*, eds. Stephen D. Reese, Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., and August E. Grant (Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2001), 47.

[90]Framing and frame building are other means by which news content can be influenced, and they are discussed in more detail in the "Influences on Media Content" section.

[91]Pan and Kosicki, "Framing as a Strategic Action in Public Deliberation," 40.

[92]Berkowitz, "TV News Sources and News Channels," 510-511.

[93]See Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message*, 2d ed., 206.

national interests and security, and he encouraged the publishers to censor their own content.[94]

Additional literature suggests that other levels of government, not just the Commander in Chief, are also successful at influencing media coverage, namely because journalists tend to rely on official sources and official government opinion for their news stories.[95] In fact, Berkowitz found that approximately 49% of local and national television news sources in his study were affiliated with local, state, U.S., or foreign government. Similarly, Bennett examined the *New York Times*' op-ed coverage of U.S. policy toward Nicaragua as compared to congressional opinion on the administration's policy. He found that the paper indexed its coverage to the government elites' opinions—in this case, members of Congress.[96] Zaller and Chiu further tested Bennett's indexing hypothesis in their study of U.S. news magazine coverage of foreign policy crises occurring from 1945-1991. Specifically, the authors examined the rules by which reporters "slant" news coverage. They found that *Time* and *Newsweek* journalists tended to "index" the slant of their coverage of these crises to echo governmental opinion.[97]

Although it may seem that the media actively seek out official government views, as indicated in the aforementioned cases, the government and politicians both seek to influence

---

[94]Richard Reeves, *President Kennedy: Profile of Power* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), 108-109; see also Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message*, 2d ed., 206.

[95]For example, see Herbert Gans, *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980); Bernard Cecil Cohen, *The Press and Foreign Policy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963); Leon V. Sigal, *Reporters and Officials: The Organization and Politics of Newsmaking* (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath, 1973); Berkowitz, "TV News Sources and News Channels," 508-513.

[96]Lance W. Bennett, "Toward a Theory of Press-State Relations," *Journal of Communication* 40, no. 2 (June 1990): 103-125.

[97]John Zaller and Dennis Chiu, "Government's Little Helper: U.S. Press Coverage of Foreign Policy Crises, 1945-1991," *Political Communication* 13, no. 4 (October-December 1996): 385-405.

the press coverage as well. Gandy noted that "at every level of government, in every agency, there are information specialists whose responsibility it is to ensure that the nation's public media carry the desired message forward."[98] In many cases, those working for politicians and government officials use prepackaged news such as VNRs and print releases, the same communication tools used by public relations practitioners. In fact, political figures and the specialized departments in government typically have their own public affairs units or information officers to ensure that their messages are relayed to the public via the media. For instance, a *New York Times* article reported that "the Bush administration spent $254 million in its first term on public relations contracts, nearly double what the last Clinton administration spent."[99] Thus, political figures' use of prepackaged news can be a more covert process that is not as easily recognizable by the public because of the indirect means by which they deliver their messages. The same *Times* article reported that "at least 20 federal agencies, including the Defense Department and the Census Bureau, have made and distributed hundreds of television news segments" from about 2001-2005.[100] As found with Farsetta and Price's study, however, many of these prepackaged news items were broadcast throughout the country without stations acknowledging the government's production role.[101]

As with any other successful communication strategy, the government knows to create a specific message and distribute it when it will have the most impact. This was the case when the government had a VNR created dealing with Medicare. The "interview" with

---

[98]Gandy, *Beyond Agenda Setting*, 74.

[99]David Barstow and Robin Stein, "Under Bush, a New Age of Prepackaged TV News," *New York Times*, 13 March 2005, http://www.nytimes.com/2005/03/13/politics/13covert.html?ei=5090&en=c040ac38c7 b344fa&ex=1268370000&adxnnl=1&partner=rssuserland&adxnnlx=1165503797-DBum1avrEKRdb74eFEug RA# (accessed 12 November 2006).

[100]Ibid.

[101]Farsetta and Price, "Fake TV News."

a health and human services secretary was scripted and included a suggested lead-in stating that President Bush had just signed the first prescription drug plan for people using Medicare. Strategically, the report was "distributed in January 2004, not long before Mr. Bush hit the campaign trail and cited the drug benefit as one of his major accomplishments," according to the *New York Times*.[102]

Instead of simply creating and distributing prepackaged news programs, the government has also garnered favorable discussion of its policies and issues through other means. In approximately one month's time in 2005, three syndicated conservative columnists were paid thousands of dollars to promote the Bush Administration's agendas. In early January, *USA Today* reported that the Bush administration paid nationally syndicated commentator Armstrong Williams $240,000 to promote its No Child Left Behind Act through regular mentions in his column and on his broadcasts. [103] Williams contended that he had already supported the act numerous times in his newspaper column distributed by Tribune Media Services (TMS) and on his nationally syndicated television show, "The Right Side." [104] TMS dropped the column, which was distributed to about 50 newspapers nationwide, as a result of the controversy. [105]

Later that month, the *Washington Post* exposed syndicated columnist Maggie Gallagher for working under a $21,500 contract for the Department of Health and Human

---

[102]Ibid.

[103]Greg Toppo, "Education Dept. Paid Commentator to Promote Law," *USA Today*, January 7, 2005, http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2005-01-06-williams-whitehouse_x.htm?POE=click-refer (accessed January 7, 2005).

[104]Armstrong Williams, "My Apology," January 10, 2005, www.townhall.com/columnists/ Armstrongwilliams/printaw20050110.shtml (accessed February 3, 2005); Dave Astor, "Armstrong Williams' Column Axed by TMS," *Editor and Publisher,* January 7, 2005, http://www.editorandpublisher. com/eandp/news/article_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1000749251 (accessed January 30, 2005).

[105]Astor, "Armstrong Williams' Column Axed by TMS."

Services (HHS) and promoting the Bush Administration's Healthy Marriage initiative.

Gallagher apologized to her readers for failing to disclose her government contract while she

continued to write about the program. One of her pieces even referred to "Bush's

'genius.'"[106] In this case, however, Gallagher's syndication service, Universal Press

Syndicate (UPS), chose to keep her. Executive Vice President and Editor Lee Salem told

Editor and Publisher magazine that this case was different from Williams' because Gallagher

was completing assigned projects rather than promoting a certain stance or issue in her

column.[107]

A day later, a similar example emerged when self-syndicated columnist Michael

McManus admitted in an online column, ironically titled "Ethics & Religion," to receiving

funds from HHS to meet with local organizers of the healthy marriage initiatives. McManus,

who is president and co-founder of Marriage Savers, also confessed to writing columns that

praised the Bush administration for the same initiatives without disclosing that his

organization received a consulting fee. [108]

Although the aforementioned instances of government payment occurred in news

media, the administration has also worked its way into prime-time programming. In 2000,

U.S. News & World Report described how the White House Office of National Drug Control

Policy had a concealed financial agreement with ABC, NBC, CBS, FOX, and WB to include

---

[106]Howard Kurtz, "Bush Urges End to Contracts with Commentators," *Washington Post*, January 27, 2005, http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A39872-2005Jan26 (accessed January 27, 2005).

[107]Dave Astor, "Universal: Why We're Keeping Maggie Gallagher," *Editor and Publisher*, January 26, 2005, http://www.editorandpublisher.com/eandp/departments/syndicates/article_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1000777943 (accessed March 20, 2005).

[108]Dave Astor, "Columnist McManus Apologizes for Not Disclosing Federal Funding," *Editor and Publisher,* February 3, 2005, http:// www.editorandpublisher.com/eandp/news/article_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1000788577 (accessed February 3, 2005); Michael McManus, "Anatomy of and Ethical Lapse," *Marriage Savers*, February 5, 2005, http://marriagesavers.com/Columns/C1223.htm (accessed February 5, 2005).

anti-drug subject matter in their programming. The networks permitted the White House

Office to review approximately 100 scripts for programs such as Beverly Hills 90210,

Chicago Hope, and ER. Although the networks all admitted that they allowed the White

House Office to do so, they "insist that they never made any changes because of government

pressure."[109] Using popular shows to advance political messages, however, is not a new

strategy and can be traced back to the 1980s when Nancy Reagan promoted her "Just Say

No" campaign on "Diff'rent Strokes" and "Punky Brewster."

Organizational Influences

In addition to external forces, pressures on the media can also come from people and

factors at the organizational level. Influences at the organizational level seem to largely

depend on the structure, size, and ownership of the media entity. Economic pressures can

also derive from this level of influence and often result from increased bottom-line worries.

These economic concerns can constrain work in the media organization and may, in turn,

influence decisions about content.[110] Constraints and pressures at the organizational level

are largely communicated by owners and top executives. Thus, economic and

owner/executive pressures are first discussed, followed by ownership concentration and its

possible effects on content.

Economic pressures

Since many media organizations today are publicly traded companies, frontline

management and journalists are not only accountable to higher executives, but to

---

[109]Betsy Streisand, "Network Noodling," *U.S. News & World Report*, 24 January 2000, 26.

[110]Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message*, 2d ed., 145.

stockholders as well. In discussing market-driven journalism, McManus noted that media

organizations are a part of a "market-based economy," and they compete in four different

markets: investors, advertisers, sources of news, and consumers.[111] He argued that these

investors are the most influential in the production of news because they are a part of the

corporate structure while the other three markets—advertisers, consumers, and sources—

must exert their influence from outside the corporation. Since the investors, or owners,

appear to have the strongest influence in media organizations, according to McManus'

model, news workers may feel economic and bottom-line pressures from them or from top-

level executives who are likely relaying the messages. And, research suggests that they are

indeed noticing the effects of these economic concerns in both the newspaper and television

industries.

In the newspaper industry, chains are often perceived as forcing profit-driven

material. At least one study supports the notion that they are only interested in "all the news

that makes a profit."[112] This view suggests that corporate executives act as a sieve, allowing

only profit-driven news items to seep through. That is, they are serving as gatekeepers

controlling the flow of information received by the audience with a motive primarily of

financial self-interest.

Non-independent newspapers have often been viewed as placing profits and financial

expectations above journalistic quality.[113] For example, Lacy, Shaver, and St. Cyr conducted

---

[111]John H. McManus, *Market-Driven Journalism: Let the Citizen Beware*? (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1994), 26-27, 32.

[112]Clarice N. Olien, Phillip J. Tichenor, and George A. Donohue, "Relation Between Corporate Ownership And Editor Attitudes About Business," *Journalism Quarterly* 65 (summer 1988): 259-66.

[113]Stephen Lacy, Mary Alice Shaver, and Charles St. Cyr, "The Effects of Public Ownership and Newspaper Competition on the Financial Performance of Newspaper Corporations: A Replication and Extension," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 73 (summer 1996): 332-41; John C. Busterna, "How

a study concerning publicly owned newspaper groups and their effects on financial

performance and competition.[114] Since publicly owned newspapers, as the study points out,

have more constituencies than privately owned papers, they are more bound to profit

concerns. Instead of just answering to employees, readers, and advertisers, the publicly

traded newspapers must answer to stockholders and financial analysts as well.[115] A separate

study by Coulson, however, found that journalists from both group- and individually owned

newspapers did not see the newspapers' profit-seeking goals as negatively affecting coverage

or information diversity. Still, it is important to point out that just because journalists from

these two ownership categories did not differ much on their opinions, a "sizeable minority"

of those responding recognized negative effects due to the profit goals.[116]

A more recent 2004 survey reported in *Quill* suggested that economic pressures and

concerns may have increased since Coulson's study. The survey of journalists conducted by

four major media-workers unions, including TV and newspapers, found that 83% of the

respondents cited "too much emphasis on the bottom line" as the media industry's most

serious problem.[117] The same article referred to a separate survey that found 57% of

---

Managerial Ownership Affects Profit Maximization in Newspaper Firms," *Journalism Quarterly* 66 (summer 1989): 302-07, 358.

[114]Lacy, Shaver, and St. Cyr, "Effects of Public Ownership and Competition on Financial Performance," 332-41. See also, William B. Blankenberg and Gary W. Ozanich, "The Effects of Public Ownership on the Financial Performance of Newspaper Corporations," *Journalism Quarterly* 70 (spring 1993): 68-75.

[115]Lacy, Shaver, and St. Cyr, "Effects of Public Ownership and Competition on Financial Performance," 339.

[116]David C. Coulson, "Impact of Ownership on Newspaper Quality," *Journalism Quarterly* 71 (summer 1994): 408.

[117]Michael Stoli and John McManus, "Downward Spiral: Many Journalists Say Media's Duties, Ethics Sliding in Order to Conform to the Company's Bottom Line," *Quill* 93, no. 3 (April 2005): 10.

journalists in local newsrooms and 66% in national newsrooms felt that "bottom-line pressure is seriously hurting the quality of news coverage."[118]

Meyer examined ethical issues in newspaper newsrooms in his 1985 ASNE survey, including financial conflicts of interests and economic concerns at U.S. dailies.[119] This research was reprised in 2005, and results were compared to track changes across time. One survey question asked respondents how often their publishers asked for special handling of an article about a company or organization with economic clout over their papers. The results were promising, as both editors and staff members reported significantly fewer instances of this type of executive request.[120]

While many of the aforementioned examples deal mainly with economic pressures at newspapers, other research suggests that economic goals and their influence on content are even more evident in the television industry.[121] The findings from the surveys in the *Quill* article provide some support for this argument. This claim and evidence by other scholars, such as McManus, suggest that television content may be more susceptible to influence because economic pressures are more severe in broadcasting.   Shoemaker and Reese hypothesized that radio and TV are more sensitive to the need to make a profit than print media because nearly all of their income originates from advertising.[122] And, "unlike most daily newspapers, television stations compete head to head with comparable organizations offering a very similar product. The inflexible time within which to program commercials

---

[118]Ibid.

[119]Philip Meyer, *Ethical Journalism* (White Plains, N.Y.: Longman Inc., 1987).

[120]Colistra, "Financial Conflicts of Interest."

[121]Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message*, 2d ed., 149.

[122]Ibid, 267.

translates every programming decision into an economic trade-off."[123] Findings from the

Pew Research Center show support for these claims.

A 1999 Pew survey found that 53% of national television journalists believed that

bottom-line pressures were seriously hurting the quality of news coverage. This finding

translates into a 16 percentage-point increase from those who were surveyed just four years

earlier. The change over time was even more apparent on the local level, as 46% responded

that increasing bottom-line pressures were having a negative impact on quality. This figure

represents a 22 percentage-point jump from local TV journalists who were surveyed in

1995.[124] Pew asked journalists the same question in 2004 and found that views of economic

pressure on content quality have worsened. Sixty-three percent of national and 60% of the

local radio and TV executives and journalists surveyed claimed that increased bottom-line

pressures were hurting news coverage. Again, this large jump indicates that the negative

effects of financial pressures have increased over time.

Owner/Executive Pressures

As mentioned, constraints and pressures at the organizational level are largely

communicated by owners and top executives. The owners or the head executives, according

to Shoemaker and Reese, are the ultimate authority figures in determining the goals and

policies of the media organization. As a result, all people working in the organization must

answer to them and follow their guidelines if they expect to keep their jobs. They argue that

"media owners have an unmistakable impact on media content because they [establish]

---

[123]Ibid, 149.

[124]"Business and Public Pressures: Striking the Balance, Audience Interest, Business Pressures and Journalists' Values."

policy for the entire organization."[125] As media organizations grow larger and become more complex as a result of ownership concentration, top-level executives become more connected to outside organizations. And, as McManus points out, "management has a legal responsibility to serve the economic interest of owners."[126] As a result, top-level executives may exert demands on journalists to uphold these economic interests, as well as others. Evidence in literature supports these assertions of executive and owner pressures and influences on content.

Busterna's 1989 study on types of managerial ownership and their effects on profit goals found that newspaper managers who were not owners placed more emphasis on building profits than owner managers. This finding contrasts economic theory, which holds that owner managers place higher emphasis on profits, but supports many journalists' contentions. Results also suggest that local newspaper owners seem to be in business for reasons beyond maximizing profits. [127] In contrast, Olien, Tichenor, and Donohue surveyed Minnesota editors for their 1988 study and found that editors of locally owned, individual newspapers were more concerned with profits than their group-owned counterparts. The authors maintain that this concern most likely stems from the fact that editors at individual papers often have to serve two separate roles of editor and owner. [128]

Other research has focused on how executive and owner pressures affect content choices. In a 30 year-old study measuring political news bias, Coffey analyzed eight

---

[125]Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message*, 137.

[126]Ibid, 27.

[127]Busterna, "How Managerial Ownership Affects Profit Maximization," 306-307.

[128]Olien, Tichenor, and Donohue, "Corporate Ownership and Editor Attitudes about Business," 262-264.

Colorado daily newspapers beginning the day before the 1974 general election. He also

determined political orientation of the editors and publishers either by reviewing editorial

page recommendations before the election or by a written inquiry to the editors. Coffey

found a strong probability that management attitudes affected political coverage.[129] It is

important to point out, however, that editors are not typically considered top-level executives

in the structure at this organizational level. Publishers, on the other hand, are sometimes

considered top executives, depending on the newspaper's organizational structure.[130] As a

result, some of the publishers in Coffey's study could have had the ability to exert an

organizational level of influence on the news organization.

In a more recent study, Price examined influences on news content and pressures at

the ownership level in her survey of national television news correspondents. She found that

approximately 21% of those survey said that they had felt pressured to report a story because

of their owners, while almost the same percentage, 20.6%, reported owner pressure not to

report a story.[131]

Pew studies have reported even more instances of owner pressures. A 2000 survey

found that 51% of local journalists felt that corporate owners influence news organizations'

decisions about which stories to cover or emphasize "a great deal" or "a fair amount."[132] The

same question was asked in 2004 and yielded similar results, although responses were also

segmented by medium in this survey. Results indicate that 48% of local journalists felt the

---

[129]Philip Coffey, "A Quantitative Measure of Bias in Reporting of Political News," *Journalism Quarterly* 53 (autumn 1975): 551-553.

[130]Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message*, 118-120.

[131]Price, "Interfering Owners or Meddling Advertisers," 183.

[132]"Self Censorship: How Often and Why."

same influence from owners. The responses were comparable within both the print and

broadcast industries, but the pressure was especially clear in the latter, as 40% of local TV

and radio journalists reported "a great deal" or "a fair amount" owner influence on content

decisions.[133]

Ownership Concentration & Content

Type of ownership also plays a role in the organizational level gatekeeping function.

More concentrated media are usually charged with having an influence on their

organizations' content. In the newspaper industry, for example, non-independent papers

have been known to duplicate news content throughout their chain, which, in turn, leads to

uniformity in both editorial views and spins taken on certain issues. The same has been said

about cross-ownership situations between television stations and newspapers, as some have

been found to duplicate content and provide only a limited range of content and views.

Several studies have taken on the issue of news standardization finding different results.

Hicks and Featherston's 1978 study found no significant opinion or feature content

duplication among Louisiana newspapers under different forms of ownership.[134]

Additionally, Wagenberg and Soderland discovered no theme selection or partisanship

standardization throughout chain newspapers in the 1972 Canadian Federal election.[135] In

contrast, Akhavan-Majid, Rife, and Gopinath examined Gannett versus similar non-Gannett

---

[133]"Business and Public Pressures: Striking the Balance, Audience Interests Business Pressures and Journalists' Values," *The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press*, http://people-press.org/reports/print.php3?PageID=321 (accessed November 13, 2006).

[134]Ronald G. Hicks and James S. Featherston, "Duplication of Content in Contrasting Ownership Situations," *Journalism Quarterly* 55 (autumn 1978): 551, 553.

[135]Ronald H. Wagenberg and Walter C. Soderlund, "The Influence of Chain-Ownership on Editorial Comment in Canada," *Journalism Quarterly* 52 (spring 1975): 98.

papers in their study of ownership involving national political issues in 1989. They

compared editorial positions taken on three predetermined public issues by 56 Gannett

newspapers and 155 other newspapers. Findings suggested that chain ownership causes

standardization on policy issues and editorial positions, although the Gannett papers were

more likely to take positions.[136]

Additional concerns have also surfaced with regard to ownership and the amount of

local news coverage. A recent FCC study on TV ownership structure's effects on local news

coverage found that locally owned stations gave more time to local news—almost six

minutes more—per each half-hour newscast than their nationally owned, corporate brethren.

The research occurred in the midst of the Commission's review of media ownership rules,

but according to a story and interviews on NPR's *All Things Considered*, the study was

ordered to be stopped by FCC superiors, and staff who had received copies were advised to

return them.[137]

Another highly examined area of research is the effect of ownership on content

quality. Coulson and Hansen analyzed the news content of the Louisville Courier-Journal

after purchase by Gannett. They found that when measured against the increased size of the

news hole, hard news coverage actually decreased. Hard news coverage, the authors contend,

is valuable because it offers readers a better chance to inform themselves on topics that affect

their lives.[138] In contrast, Demers' study tested a theory of corporate newspaper effects,

---

[136]Roya Akhavan-Majid, Anita Rife, and Sheila Gopinath, "Chain Ownership and Editorial
Independence: A Case Study of Gannett Newspapers," *Journalism Quarterly* 68 (spring/summer 1991): 59-66.

[137]David Folkenflik, "FCC Study of TV Ownership Comes to Light," *NPR's All Things Considered,*
September 15, 2006, http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyID=6082952 (accessed October 27,
2006).

[138]David C. Coulson and Anne Hansen, "The Louisville Courier-Journal's News Content after
Purchase by Gannett," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 72 (spring 1995): 205-215.

which included product quality. He found that newspapers possessing more corporate

characteristics actually placed greater emphasis on product quality than those papers

exhibiting fewer corporate traits. [139]

Concerns about possible coverage bias are also a common area of scholarly research

in which ownership and potential owner influences are concerned. Kenney and Simpson

examined content about the 1988 presidential race from two Washington dailies operating

under different types of ownership: the *Washington Times*, owned by a conglomerate funded

by the Unification Church; and the *Washington Post*, a publicly traded company. They found

that the *Times* exerted a conservative bias, as it devoted more than 30% of its coverage to and

in favor of the Republicans. Conversely, the *Post* presented more balanced and neutral

coverage of the race. As a result, the authors suggested that their findings support the

argument that financers and owners determine content.[140]

Financial conflicts may not be the only force for owners and media entities when

making news and editorial decisions. Instead, ideological or politically charged factors may

come into play. For example, in Hasen's *Texas Law Review* article, he suggested that

political influence may be a strong motivator to own media organizations and that those

owners could use the companies to influence public opinion for their own self-interests.[141]

---

[139]David Pearce Demers, *The Menace of the Corporate Newspaper: Fact or Fiction?* (Ames, Iowa: Ames University Press, 1996): 277-302.

[140]Keith Kenney and Chris Simpson, "Was Coverage of the 1988 Presidential Race by Washington's Two Major Dailies Biased?," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 70, no. 2 (summer 1993): 348.

[141]Richard L. Hasen, "Campaign Finance Laws and the Rupert Murdoch Problem," *Texas Law Review* 77, no. 7 (June 1999): 1638-39

Such self-interests may include political favors, gaining or maintaining access to candidates, or influencing principled decision-making.[142]

Gilens and Hertzman examined newspaper coverage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 in relation to corporate ownership. For their analysis, they identified the country's 100 largest media companies by revenue and placed them into three categories: those with no television holdings, those that owned five or fewer stations, and those that owned nine or more. They found that newspapers that did not stand to gain from the Act, those without television holdings, covered the ownership caps only slightly more than the other two groups. Other findings, however, suggested that the financial interests of the owners influenced both editorials and hard news reporting. Newspapers that stood to gain from the loosening of television ownership rules offered more favorable coverage, while those that were not likely to gain provided "overwhelmingly unfavorable" coverage of the Act.[143]

Similarly, Colistra's study focused on how different types of media groups covered the FCC's more recent relaxation of ownership rules. She found that newspapers without television holdings published more editorials about the issue than those owning a substantial number of stations. Findings also showed that the tone of editorials between the two types of media groups also differed significantly, as 100% of the editorials running in the newspapers with substantial television holdings presented the issue in a positive light.[144]

---

[142]Ibid, 1644.

[143]Martin Gilens and Craig Hertzman, "Corporate Ownership and News Bias: Newspaper Coverage of the 1996 Telecommunications Act," *Journal of Politics* 62, no. 2 (May 2000): 374, 383.

[144]Rita F. Colistra, "Coverage and Editorial Framing of the FCC's 2003 Review of Media Ownership Rules: A Comparison of the Cross-Owners and the Print Purists" (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, April 2006, photocopied). Unpublished work in draft for publication consideration.

In another policy study, Snider and Page examined newspaper coverage of one aspect of the Telecommunications Act involving the FCC giving broadcasters free use of the airwaves to ease the transition into digital transmission. They found a strong, significant, contrasting relationship among the different ownership groups. Those newspapers with substantial television ownership, defined as those with at least 20% of revenues from this area, published editorials that were in favor of the airwaves "giveaway," while those that received little or no revenue from broadcasting ran editorials opposing the issue.[145]

Colistra also addressed the digital spectrum "giveaway" and found that media entities that stood to gain from it, the network television stations, ignored the issue completely over the nine-year period of study.[146] She also found that when the newspapers covered the issue, more than 44% of their hard-news coverage was either "negative" or "very negative," compared to only 4% of "positive" coverage. Similarly, Price's 1998 study of network news coverage of the Telecommunications Act found that only 16% of the big three networks' broadcasts over a three-year period dealt with the Act's potential role in increasing ownership concentration in the television news industry.[147] The lack of coverage came as no surprise to one politician. The now-defunct *Brill's Content,* a media watchdog magazine, reported that John McCain spoke about the issue in the Senate claiming, "You will not see

---

[145]James H. Snider and Benjamin I. Page, "Does Media Ownership Affect Media Stands? The Case of the Telecommunications Act of 1996," Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, April 1997, as cited in Mark Cooper, *Media Ownership and Democracy in the Digital Information Age*, (Center for Internet & Society, Stanford Law School: Creative Commons, n.d.): 48.

[146]Rita F. Colistra, "Out of Sight, Out of Mind: Agenda Cutting in the Mass Media," Paper presented to the Communication Theory & Methodology Division at the Association for Education in Journalism in Mass Communication Midwinter Conference, Bowling Green, Ohio, February 2006.

[147]Cindy J. Price, "Does Power Change the News? A Content Analysis of Network News Coverage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996," Paper presented in the News Division at the Broadcast Education Association meeting in Las Vegas, Nev., April 1998).

this story on any television or hear it on any radio broadcast because it affects them."[148]

These findings suggest that media organizations that stand to benefit from policy issues may

not necessarily like to bring attention to themselves, while those that do not stand to benefit

not only provide more coverage, in most cases, but more negative coverage as well.[149]

In summary, the literature strongly suggests that forces at the organizational level

appear to influence coverage decisions and content. As evidenced by this review, overall

organizational pressures seem to be more obvious and severe in the broadcast industry,

especially at the local level of television, thus supporting Shoemaker and Reese's hypothesis.

More research, however, is needed to examine each area of organizational influence outlined

in this section, especially scholarship involving all three types simultaneously.

Influences Within the Media Organization

Along with external forces and broader organizational pressures, influences on media

content may also derive from the very place in which it is created: the media organization

itself. While Shoemaker and Reese did not specifically name this "within-media

organization" level of influence in their onion diagram, they did refer to two other related

sources, individual and media routines, which include (1) pressures from possible traits

within the journalists themselves or (2) other constraints such as time, staff, and resources.

As it is conceptualized and explained here, within-media influences incorporate facets from

the two levels from the hierarchical model that were just mentioned. What is different,

however, is that the "within-media organization" factor focuses more on forces within the

---

[148]Rifka Rosenwein, "Why Media Mergers Matter," *Brill's Content* 2, no. 10 (December 1999/January 2000): 94; Crouteau and Hoynes, *The Business of the Media*, 177.

[149]Colistra, "Out of Sight, Out of Mind: Agenda Cutting in the Mass Media."

news entity that may affect how journalists produce content and cover (or not cover) certain topics. That is, it centers on possible pressure from management, such as assignment editors or other superiors, working within the news organization, along with smaller-scale organizational types of restraints, such as staff size. These potential influences from within the media entity are briefly discussed in the sections that follow.

Staff Size Pressure

The size of a media organization's staff has been linked to studies regarding ownership,[150] competition,[151] news quality,[152] and overall industry performance,[153] to name a few. Although the research focuses on different media and areas, findings typically indicate that a larger staff size is most desirable. For example, Underwood and Stamm examined staff size, among other factors, in their study of newsroom management policies at 12 West coast newspapers. They found that changes in staff size, which were generally reductions, most often occurred at smaller, family-owned newspapers. During the on-site interviews, the researchers also found that respondents commonly associated a decline in quality with changes in coverage and cutbacks. Thus, a reduction in staff size was viewed as a negative change while increases in staff size were viewed positively by the staff members.[154]

---

[150]Doug Underwood and Keith Stamm, "Balancing Business with Journalism: Newsroom Policies at 12 West Coast Newspapers," *Journalism Quarterly* 69, no. 2 (summer 1992): 301-317.

[151]Angela Powers, "Competition, Conduct, and Ratings in Local Television News: Applying the Industrial Organization Model," *Journal of Media Economics* 6, no. 2 (summer 1993): 37-44.

[152]John C. Busterna, "Television Station Ownership Effects on Programming and Idea Diversity: Baseline Data," *Journal of Media Economics* 1, no. 2 (fall 1988): 63-74.

[153]Stephen Lacy, Frederick Fico, and Todd Simon, "Relationship among Economic, Newsroom, and Content Variables: A Path Model," *Journal of Media Economics* 2, no. 2 (fall 1989): 51-66.

[154]Underwood and Stamm, "Balancing Business with Journalism," 309, 312, 314.

Research also suggests that staff size is related to industry factors other than employee opinions of the issue. In his 1978 study of ownership, CATV, and local TV news quality, Busterna found that the control variables for the study—penetration of cable TV, household income, UHF/VHF, and number of TV stations and households in the market under study—were all related to staff size. Two other main variables in the study, both ownership variables, were not found to affect the size of the news staff.[155]

In a separate project 10 years later, Busterna pointed out that a larger news budget and a larger staff size should generally correspond to the quality of local television news programming.[156] The same appeared to be true for newspapers, as Lacy, Fico, and Simon found that industry performance was positively correlated with the size of the news staff.[157] Still, the positive implications of a larger staff may not be enough to encourage those in the industry to implement research findings, as evidenced by the subsequent examples.

Bernstein, Lacy, Cassara, and Lau's examination of geographic coverage of local TV news found that larger stations devoted a smaller percentage of news space to local news than smaller stations, despite the fact that newscasts were lengthier. The authors proposed that "stations expanding their newscast length do not increase their staff enough to fill the added space with an equivalent amount of local news."[158] In a later study, Powers examined ratings, competition, and conduct in local television news. She found that news programs added more news time per day when they were in intense competition. This competition,

---

[155]John C. Busterna, "Ownership, CATV, and the Quality of Local Television News." Paper presented to the annual meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism, Seattle, Wash., August 15, 1978.

[156]Busterna, "Television Station Ownership Effects on Programming and Idea Diversity," 68.

[157]Lacy, Fico, and Simon, "Relationship among Economic, Newsroom, and Content Variables," 51-66.

[158]James M. Bernstein, Stephen Lacy, Catherine Cassara, and Tuen-yu Lau, "Geographic Coverage by Local Television News," *Journalism Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (winter 1990): 670.

however, did not directly affect staff size, which led Powers to argue that "increasing hours of news may initially be seen as a less expensive means of competition than adding staff members."[159]

With empirical evidence connecting staff size to performance and quality programming, it seems that media owners and executives would want to increase, or at least maintain, the size of their staffs, despite economic hardships and increased bottom-line pressures that have faced the industry. But how have the number of staffers fared in recent years? According to a 2004 Pew survey, 31% of local TV journalists reported that newsroom staff size has decreased over the past three years, while about the same percentage reported that it had either increased (30%) or stayed the same (32%). Print journalists, however, noted more marked decreases in staff with 54%, and a mere 16% reported staff size increases; 29% said that their newsrooms remained unchanged.[160] In contrast, a survey conducted by RTNDA and Ball State University just two years earlier indicated that TV staff numbers had increased across the board from 2001 with the exception of full-time employee decreases among independent stations.[161] Thus, a comparison of the two surveys shows conflicting results, as the Pew survey questioned journalists about staff size changes over the past three years—a time period that included 2002, the year in which the RTNDA/Ball State study was conducted.

---

[159]Powers, "Competition, Conduct, and Ratings in Local Television News," 42.

[160]"Bottom-Line Pressures Now Hurting Coverage, Say Journalists," *The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press,* May 23, 2004, http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?PageID=829 (accessed November 15, 2006).

[161]Bob Papper, "On the Road to Recovery," *RTNDA/Ball State University Survey*, http://www.bsu. edu/web/rpapper/staff%2003%20v6.htm (accessed on December 1, 2006).

Direct & Indirect Management Pressures

Instead of smaller scale, organizational types of constraints, such as staff-size limitations, influences within a media entity may also derive from management pressures. Demands from superiors who work in the news organization on a day-to-day basis can be either direct or indirect.

Direct pressures are more obvious and may consist of a manager specifically telling a journalist not to cover a story. Or, they may provide clear instructions about what topics to cover (or not cover) and how to cover them. A 2000 survey by Pew Research Center asked print and broadcast journalists about whether journalists sometimes purposely avoid covering certain stories that they believe are truly newsworthy. While more than half, 57%, answered no, 42% reported that journalists do sometimes avoid stories.[162] Although this figure shows that less than half of the journalists surveyed thought this was a problem, it is large enough to rouse concern. Of those who believed that journalists sometime purposely avoid newsworthy stories, an average of 30% (28% national and 31% local) answered that news workers get signals from their bosses to avoid them. Furthermore, 35% (33% national and 37% local) reported direct signals, such as their superiors specifically telling them not to cover it, clear instructions about what types of stories were acceptable/unacceptable, or that it was simply "pretty clear."[163]

As Warren Breed noted in the classic study "Social Control in the Newsroom," management direction is not typically overt or directly stated. Instead, pressure from superiors is usually relayed in a more subtle, indirect manner. As one staffer in the study put

---

[162]"Self Censorship: How Often and Why," *The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press* April 30, 2000, http://people-press.org/reports/print.php3?PageID=220 (accessed November 15, 2006): 3.

[163]Ibid, 4.

it, news routines and policies about what to cover (or not cover) and how to cover it are learned "by osmosis."[164] That is, journalists are socialized over time by methods such as reprimand or editing to learn what type of stories are acceptable. This socialization is also learned through indirect signals, such as "a nod of the head, as if to say, 'Please don't rock the boat.'"[165] The aforementioned Pew survey addressed these unspoken, hidden norms and indirect signals. Of those journalists who believed that news workers sometimes purposely avoid newsworthy stories, an average of 24% (35% national and 17% local) said that journalists decide to avoid these stories based on how they believe their bosses would respond.[166] This is an example of newsroom routines and socialization within the news organization. As mentioned earlier, 30% said that journalists avoid stories because they get signals from their superiors to do so. Of those, 32% (25% national and 37% local) claimed that this was a result of "indirect" signals, such as yawning at or poking fun of a story idea, or showing a lack of interest by simply not airing or publishing the story once it is created.[167] If this is repeated over time, journalists learn, or become socialized, to avoid these stories on their own if they want to get rewarded by their superiors. Breed contended that a journalist eventually "learns to anticipate what is expected of him so as to win rewards and avoid punishments."[168]

While these hidden norms and routines appear to be powerful in the newsroom culture, they are not afforded as much attention as more direct means of communicating

---

[164]Breed, "Social Control in the Newsroom: A Functional Analysis," 328.

[165]Ibid, 329.

[166]"Self Censorship: How Often and Why," http://people-press.org/reports/print.php3?PageID=220, 4.

[167]Ibid.

[168]Breed, "Social Control of the Newsroom," 328.

policy. This inattention may be because they are more difficult to define, measure, and analyze. In discussing journalism ethics and codes, newspaperman and media scholar Philip Meyer suggested that, instead of the written formal ethics codes that are found in newsrooms throughout the country, unwritten codes are more often involved in ethical decision making in the newsroom. He explained that these rules become so "deeply embedded in the newsroom culture that they need never be made explicit to be enforced, but can exist simply as a set of reflexes."[169] These "reflexes" are the equivalent of the socialization process in the newsroom to which Breed referred. Perhaps partly because these unspoken codes and "proper" behavior are more difficult to analyze, more direct forms of management communication, such as spoken or written policy, have been more prevalent in scholarship.

Influences on Media Content: Different Theoretical Approaches

As discussed throughout this chapter, extramedia, organizational, and within-media forces may attempt to influence news content, and they aim to do so through different means for various reasons. These sources may shape coverage by (1) affecting/influencing the topics, stories, or issues the media actually cover (building the media's agenda); (2) influencing the way a story, issue, or topic is covered; that is, the angle or tone taken when discussing the topic (building the media's frames); or by (3) convincing the media to give an issue, story, or topic little attention or to not cover it at all (cutting the item from the media's agenda).   Each theoretical approach is discussed in more detail in the pages that follow. Special attention is paid to the elucidation of agenda cutting, the third type of influence mentioned, as it is a largely ignored phenomenon that has been afforded little attention by

---

[169]Meyer, *Ethical Journalism*, 24-25.

researchers. Thus, this project aims to develop and expand this important area of media

scholarship.

Agenda Building

The mass media's influence on audiences has been a common area of study ever since

the advent of the magic bullet theory in the 1920s and 1930s. This line of scholarship was

sparked by such research and events as the Payne Fund studies of motion pictures' effects on

children and Orson Welles' "War of the Worlds" radio broadcast in 1938.[170] Many years

later, McCombs and Shaw made significant strides in media effects and public opinion

research. Their initial agenda-setting study of undecided voters in the 1968 election found

that the objects that are emphasized most in the media come to be deemed as most important

(by rank order) by the public.[171] This led them cite Cohen's claim that the press "may not be

successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in

telling its readers what to think *about*."[172] Since then, media effects research exploded,

including more than 130 agenda-setting studies alone examining the effects of the media

agenda on the public agenda.[173]

---

[170]Shaearon A. Lowery and Melvin L. DeFleur, *Milestones in Mass Communication Research: Media Effects*, 3d ed. (White Plains, N.Y.: Longman Publishers, 1995).

[171]Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw, "The Agenda-Setting Function of the Mass Media," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36 (1972): 176-87; Maxwell McCombs, *Setting the Agenda: The Mass Media and Public Opinion* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing Inc., 2004): 5.

[172]McCombs and Shaw, "The Agenda-Setting Function of the Mass Media," 177; Cohen, *The Press and Foreign Policy,* 120.

[173]Everett M. Rogers, James W. Dearing, and Dorine Bregman, "The Anatomy of Agenda-Setting Research," *The Journal of Communication* 43, no. 2 (spring 1993): 72. Note: Although it has been noted by the aforementioned authors and WAPOR that there have been more than 300 agenda-setting studies, this figure includes agenda-building scholarship along with studies of other forms of agenda setting (see "Honorary Degree Awarded," *WAPOR Newsletter* (2d quarter 2002): 3, http://www.unl.edu/WAPOR/Newsletters/2q2002.pdf# search='roger%20studies%20of%20agenda%20setting%20since%20chapel%20hill%20study' (accessed on Nov. 15, 2006)).

While many studies have focused on how media content influences audience cognition, attitudes, and opinion, research concerning how the *media* is influenced in the first place has been afforded less attention. Although Rogers, Dearing, and Bregman referred to this process as *media agenda setting*,[174] it is more generally known as agenda building, a term that helps distinguish its application from the media-effects approach of agenda setting. Essentially, while agenda-setting theory suggests that the media tell *people* "what to think about," the agenda-building process focuses on the internal and external forces that tell the *media* what to think (and write) about.

Agenda Building and Agenda Setting: Terms Worth Distinction?

This area of research has often been identified as evolving from agenda-setting theory, and McCombs has even classified it as the fourth phase of agenda setting.[175] In actuality, agenda-building research was published in the realm of political science a year before the famous agenda-setting study was introduced to those in mass media and public opinion.[176] Thus, technically, it is not possible that this area of scholarship emerged from agenda setting—at least in the mass media sense. Instead, both can be thought of distinct processes in the same line of research.

McCombs has also argued that "there is no need for a separate term," and both should be labeled as agenda-setting studies for the sake of parsimony because both involve the

---

[174]Everett M. Rogers, James W. Dearing, and Dorine Bregman, "The Anatomy of Agenda-Setting Research," *The Journal of Communication* 43, no. 2 (spring 1993).

[175]Maxwell McCombs, "A Look at Agenda-Setting: Past, Present and Future," *Journalism Studies* 6, no. 4 (August 2005): 548-549.

[176]Roger W. Cobb and Charles D. Elder, "The Politics of Agenda-Building: An Alternative Perspective for Modern Democratic Theory," *Journal of Politics* 33 (1971): 892-915.

transfer of salience from one agenda to another.[177] An independent term, however, is

necessary, as these are two distinct stages in which the foci and variables are different. In

agenda setting, for example, the media agenda is the *independent* variable. With agenda

building, on the other hand, the media agenda is considered the *dependent* variable. This is

represented in Figure 2.1 below, which was partially adapted from Scheufele's work.[178] As

the pictorial depiction suggests, agenda building actually comes *before* agenda setting, but

the processes are connected. That is, external, and possibly internal, forces attempt to set the

media agenda (agenda building) so they can, in turn, influence the audience agenda (agenda

setting). Thus, discrete names are essential to prevent the two areas of studies and their

operationalizations from getting muddled.

```
* Elites,
* Organizational Influences
* Extramedia Influences  ———————▶  Media Agenda  ———————▶  Audience Agenda
* Some "Within-Media"
  Influences, such as internal
  executives
```

⎵‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾⎵   ⎵‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾⎵

Agenda Building   **Agenda Setting**
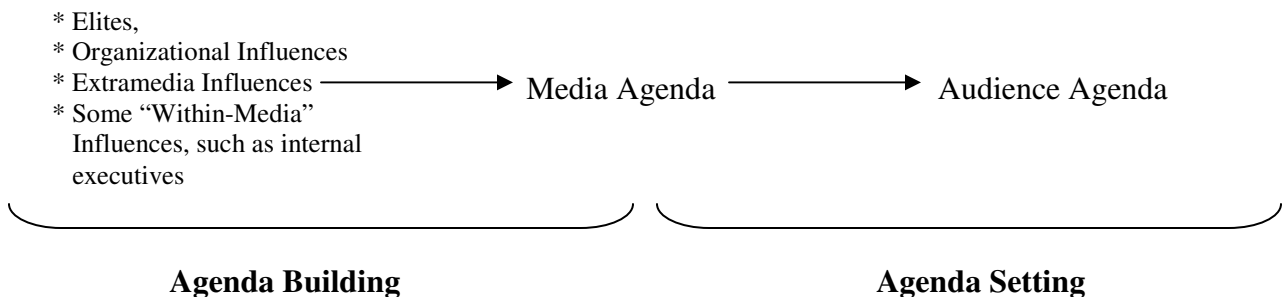
Figure 2.1 Partial Depiction of the Agenda-Building and Agenda-Setting Processes
        (adapted from Scheufele (2000))

Emergence of Agenda Building

      The importance of such research of who or what is building the media's agenda was

noted in the late 1940s by Lazarsfeld and Merton. In *Mass Communication, Popular Taste,*

---

[177]McCombs, *Setting the Agenda,* 143.

[178]Dietram A. Scheufele, "Agenda-Setting, Priming, and Framing Revisited: Another Look at
Cognitive Effects of Political Communication," Mass Communication & Society 3, nos. 2 & 3 (2000): 302.

54

and Organized Social Action, the authors argued that the media are controlled by powerful

businesses and organizations and suggested that these groups set the agenda for the media,

and in turn the audience, by influencing the content relayed to the public.[179] Cobb and Elder

defined agenda building in the political arena as the study "concerned with the identification

and specification of the types of issue conflicts that receive the attention and action of

governmental decision-makers."[180] In other words, they were "concerned with how issues

are created and why some controversies or…issues come to command the attention…of

decision makers, while others fail."[181]

Years later, Gandy stressed the role of information subsidies, such as press releases

and advertiser-produced pieces, as potential agenda-building mechanisms and sparked a

greater interest in this line of scholarship.[182] By 1991, Shoemaker and Reese had developed

their hierarchical model of influences, which was discussed earlier in this chapter. [183] This

"onion diagram" depicts the levels through which media content can be influenced prior to

reaching the audience and, thus, has been an essential tool for scholars interested in agenda

building. However, while the diagram allows for an easier classification system of where

these influences are coming from, it does not provide a comprehensive model that can

actually test the pressures and potential effects on the media and news content. Furthermore,

as mentioned earlier, few researchers have examined how the media agenda is developed or

---

[179]Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Robert K. Merton, "Mass Communication, Popular Taste, and Organized Social Action" in *Communication of Ideas*, ed. Lyman Bryson (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948), 95-118.

[180]Roger W. Cobb and Charles D. Elder, *Participation in American Politics: The Dynamics of Agenda-Building* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1972)*, 63.

[181]Cobb and Elder, *The Politics of Agenda-Building,* 905.

[182]Gandy, *Beyond Agenda Setting*.

[183]Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message.*

"set."[184] In fact, in a 1993 article, Rogers, Dearing, and Bregman uncovered only 15 publications specifically dealing with building the media's agenda.[185] Even though there have been many more studies since then, research in this area still warrants further investigation because, according to the authors, "we need to better understand how the media agenda is set, and by whom."[186]

Frame Building

In addition to building the media's agenda, external and internal sources may also attempt to control or influence the *way* story is covered. That is, they may attempt to frame a story in a light that is more favorable or beneficial to their company, organization, or boss. This process is frame building, and it suggests that internal and external forces tell the media *how* to think (or write) about an issue, story, or topic. Frames, as Neuman, Just, and Crigler pointed out, involve how the media "spin" the story and should take "into account their organizational and modality constraints, professional judgments, and certain judgments about the audience."[187] According to Maher, framing focuses on environments and relationships. Specifically, framing research not only emphasizes the *relationships* of frames, words, and sentences within a given text, but it also calls attention to the *environments* in which they were conceived, such as the source of the frame (e.g., an advertiser) and the intentions of the

---

[184]Rogers, Dearing, and Bregman, "The Anatomy of Agenda-Setting Research," 72; Berkowitz, "TV News Sources and News Channels," 508.

[185]Rogers, Dearing, and Bregman, "The Anatomy of Agenda-Setting Research," 72;

[186]Ibid, 33.

[187]W. Russell Neuman, Marion R. Just, and Ann N. Crigler, *Common Knowledge: News and the Construction of Political Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 120.

communicator (e.g., to talk about the positives of a product while leaving out undesirable reviews).[188]

As some researchers have noted, framing is difficult to study and measure because of vague definitions and the misuse of terms.[189] Scheufele has attempted to clarify certain aspects and processes of the approach to aid scholars in this important area of media studies. In his 1999 research, he argued that concepts of framing need to be specified "because frames have to be considered schemes for both presenting and comprehending the news."[190] The two types of frames are *media frames* and *audience frames*, and it is important for researchers to distinguish between them in order to determine the best methods and measures for examination in different types of studies. A *media frame* has been defined by Gamson and Modigliani as "a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events….The frame suggests what the controversy is about, the essence of the issue."[191] The conceptualization of media frames can also consist of the inadvertent or deliberate intentions of the internal or external source sending the message.[192] The second type of frame, the *audience frame*, Scheufele notes, is defined by Entman as "mentally stored

---

[188]T. Michael Maher, "Framing: An Emerging Paradigm or a Phase of Agenda Setting?," in *Framing Public Life: Perspectives on Media and Our Understanding of the Social World,* eds. Stephen D. Reese, Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., and August E. Grant (Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2001), 83-94.

[189]For example, see Scheufele, "Framing as a Theory of Media Effects."; Maher, "Framing: An Emerging Paradigm or a Phase of Agenda Setting?," 83-94; Scheufele, "Agenda-Setting, Priming, and Framing Revisited," 297-316.
.

[190]Scheufele," Framing as a Theory of Media Effects," 106.

[191]William A Gamson and Andre Modigliani, "The Changing Culture of Affirmative Action," in *Research in Political Sociology* (Vol. 3), eds. R. G. Braungart and M. M. Braungart (Greenwich, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1987), 143 as quoted in Scheufele, "Framing as a Theory of Media Effects," 143; *see also*, William A. Gamson and Andre Modigliani, "Media Discourse and Public Opinion on Nuclear Power: A Constructionist Approach," *American Journal of Sociology* 95, no. 1 (July 1989): 1-37.

[192]Scheufele, "Framing as a Theory of Media Effects," 106; William A. Gamson, "News as Framing: Comments on Graber," *American Behavioral Scientist* 33, no. 2 (November/December 1989): 157-166.

clusters of ideas that guide an individuals' processing of information."[193] That is, this type of

frame focuses on the individual level of the process.

    According to Entman, "to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and

make them more salient in a communicating test, in such a way as to promote a particular

problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment

recommendation."[194] In other words, framing not only assigns importance to an issue, but it

also presents the issue in such a way as to communicate a certain type of message. The

media may frame a message in a particular way, based on extramedia, organizational, or

within-media sources.

    In addition to distinguishing between the types of frames, Scheufele also explained

that frames need to be classified by *independent* and *dependent* variables.[195] When frames

are considered *independent* variables in media research, the study is concerned with framing

effects. For example, a researcher might be interested in how frames presented in the media

(media frames) influence how the audience understands an issue (audience frame). "The

most promising approach" to do this, according to Scheufele, is the use of both content

analysis and survey data.[196] When the media frame is the *dependent* variable, the study is

concerned with extramedia, organizational, and within-media sources that attempt to

influence the way the media frame an issue, topic, or story. Regarding frame building,

---

[193]Robert M. Entman, "Framing: Towards a Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (autumn 1993): 53 as quoted in Scheufele, "Agenda-Setting, Priming, and Framing Revisited," 306.

[194]Entman, "Framing: Towards a Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," 52.

[195]Scheufele, "Framing as a Theory of Media Effects," 107; Scheufele, "Agenda-Setting, Priming, and Framing Revisited," 306-308.

[196]Scheufele, "Agenda-Setting, Priming, and Framing Revisited," 307.

Scheufele remarked, "No evidence has yet been systematically collected about how various [intrinsic and extrinsic] factors impact the structural qualities of news in terms of framing."[197] Therefore, this much-ignored area of scholarship warrants further investigation. This classification of framing research is the focus of the current study. A partial representation of Scheufele's explication of framing research is presented in Figure 2.2 to provide a clearer picture of this area of the process.

* Elites,
* Organizational Influences
* Extramedia Influences   →   Media Frame   →   Audience Frame
* Some "Within-Media"
  Influences, such as internal
  executives

Frame Building   **Frame Setting**
(effects on media)   (media effects on audience)
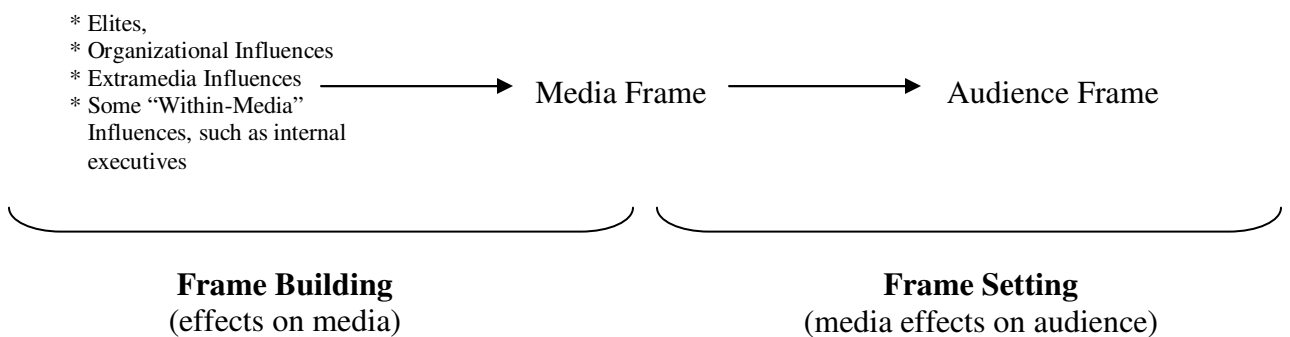
Figure 2.2 Partial Depiction of the Frame-Building and Frame-Setting Processes
                (adapted from Scheufele (2000))

Agenda Cutting

While the idea of placing an idea on the news agenda by giving it more salience has been studied for many years, it is interesting that the reverse phenomenon, keeping an item *off* the agenda, has largely been ignored in scholarly research. This concept is known as agenda cutting.

Although not specifically discussing this phenomenon, McCombs and Shaw alluded to the process in 1984 when explaining that newspaper items are "not treated equally when

---

[197]Scheufele, "Framing as a Theory of Media Effects," 109.

presented to the audience. Some are used at length, some are severely cut."[198] Still, Wober

and Gunter made perhaps the first mention of the term agenda cutting in their 1988 book,

Television and Social Control. In relation to agenda setting, they described agenda cutting as

"the reverse process whereby problems or issues have attention directed away from them by

receiving little or no media coverage."[199] Thus, it is proposed that agenda cutting may occur

in three ways: (1) by placing an item low on the news agenda (burying it); (2) by removing it

from agenda once it is there; or (3) by completely ignoring it by never placing it on the

agenda in the first place.

The process of agenda cutting has been mentioned by few scholars and researched by

even fewer. According to Wober, this is largely due to its lack of identification and

documentation.[200] He provided a notable American example that took place in 1864 when

General Meade humiliated a news reporter. In return, the northern press apparently ignored

(cut) all stories about Meade except those associated with defeat. Surely stories about the

general were deemed newsworthy by the press. But because of his harsh action against the

reporter, they cut complimentary stories about him out of the public's attention. As a result,

Wober suggested, Meade was reduced to a "non-person." [201]

Although the above example deals with a case in the 19th century, evidence indicates

agenda cutting has occurred in more modern times. In his 1991 study of television coverage

---

[198]Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw, "The Agenda Setting Function of the Press," in *Media Power in Politics*, ed. Doris A. Graber, (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, 1984): 69.

[199]J. Mallory Wober and Barrie Gunter, *Television and Social Control,* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988): 128.

[200]J. Mallory Wober, "Agenda Cutting: Some Remarks on the Phenomenon and its Importance," Paper presented at Media Tenor's Agenda-Setting Conference, Bonn, Germany, October 2001, 1.

[201]Ibid, 3.

of the conflict with Iraq and its effects on British public opinion, Wober found two instances

in which the broadcast media cut an important issue from its news agenda: (1) Syria's defeat

of Prime Minister General Aoun's position in Lebanon, and (2) the evacuation of nearly one

million Yemenis from Saudi Arabia. Of the latter item, Wober commented:

> The size and nature of such an exodus cannot have been painless; yet,
> in the context of Saudi Arabia as the base for the coalition overthrow of
> Iraq's invasion, it can be understood how, or why, the matter was lacking
> in prominence or even absent from most news.[202]

This statement suggests that prominence of a story may also play into agenda cutting.

Project Censored, a media group based out of Sonoma State University, has

investigated instances of "news stories of social significance" that did not run in the

mainstream media.[203] Each year, the organization compiles a list of 25 stories obtained from

independent news sources that were ignored, for the most part, by national media. Although

the Project does not explicitly examine possible reasons why these items were cut or the

effects on audience cognition, it does provide useful examples on which to base agenda-

cutting scholarship.

Media Tenor has been perhaps the only organization specifically researching the area

of agenda cutting. The international institute specializes in detailed and continuous content

analysis of the media, mainly examining agenda setting.[204] In 2003, Media Tenor published

a study examining the agenda-setting and agenda-cutting effects of German television news

coverage of mad cow disease from 1997 to 2002. The first official case of the disease was

---

[202]J. Mallory Wober, "Television and British public opinion on the conflict with Iraq," *Media Development* 38 (October 1991): 48.

[203]"About Us," *Project Censored*, http://www.projectcensored.org/about/index.htm (accessed February 6, 2006).

[204]For more information on Media Tenor, see http://www.mediatenor.com (accessed November 14, 2005).

announced in late 2000 and received substantial television coverage. During this time, the broadcast media appeared to set the agenda as 73% of respondents in an unaffiliated opinion poll "felt threatened" by the disease while 58% altered their consumption of beef.[205] The extensive coverage also coincided with a sharp dip in German beef consumption figures.

According to the study, the media had substantially decreased the amount of mad-cow coverage by 2001, which coincided with a 26 percentage-point decrease in the number of polled German respondents feeling endangered by the disease. By 2002, however, television coverage was placed so low on the news agenda that it was almost nonexistent. To test the cutting effects, Media Tenor correlated the scant TV coverage with German beef consumption figures. They found that a decrease in news about the disease correlated with a slow increase in consumption, despite the fact there were nearly as many confirmed cases (106) as when the first official case was confirmed in 2001 (125).[206] As this example illustrates, cutting an important item from the news agenda may lead to an uninformed public.

Although Wober began mentioning agenda cutting in the late 1980s, he did not discuss the phenomenon in much detail until 2001. While he did not actually test the function, he did provide several examples of cut news that suggested agenda cutting does, indeed, exist, which is similar to Project Censored's approach. More importantly, he proposed three main reasons why agenda cutting occurs, which essentially deal with logistical constraints, internal and external influences, and journalists' own prejudices.[207]

---

[205]"Media and Mad Cow Disease: As Low as it Gets," *Media Tenor Quarterly Journal* no. 2 (2003): 72, http://www.mediatenor.com/show_all.php?keywords=agenda%20cutting (accessed June 5, 2005).

[206]Ibid, 72-73.

[207]Wober, "Agenda Cutting," 1.

Logistical Constraints

Agenda cutting may occur because of logistical constraints, such as size of the news hole and reporting staff. First, and most obvious, news organizations can only report on a certain number of topics at a time, which results in the elimination of others. Selecting topics, however, may not be a deliberate process. In discussing agenda setting, McCombs argued that the selection of objects usually occurs fortuitously, at least for media in democratic cultures. He explained that, "because agenda-setting is an inadvertent outcome of reporting the news, this is a role that cannot be abdicated or sidestepped."[208] The same is likely true for agenda cutting.

Internal and External Influences

Agenda cutting may also occur when people within or outside the news organization "do their best to hide or camouflage stories."[209] The current study investigates this possible reason for the occurrence of agenda cutting, and it is, therefore, explained in more detail.

Wober gave an example of an internal e-mail that was circulated by an executive for the British Transport Ministry immediately following the New York terrorist attacks. The message read: "It's now a very good day to get out anything we want to bury. Councillors' expenses?"[210] The story was leaked to the press nearly a month later when it was confirmed that the department in question had, in fact, released the unfavorable information on September 12.

---

[208]Maxwell McCombs, "Building Consensus: The News Media's Agenda-Setting Roles," *Political Communication* 14 (1997): 433.

[209]Wober, "Agenda Cutting," 9.

[210]David White, "Backing to Aide Who Sought to Exploit Attacks," *Times (London),* 11 October 2001; Wober, "Agenda Cutting," 2.

In her 1998 study of network news coverage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, Price found that only 16% of the big three networks' broadcasts over a three-year period dealt with the Act's potential role in increasing ownership concentration in the television news industry.[211] Similarly, Colistra's study examined the FCC's digital spectrum "loan" to broadcasters and specifically tried to develop and find empirical support for the agenda-cutting phenomenon. She examined coverage from the three major networks, CNN, and two national newspapers, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. Colistra found strong evidence for her agenda-cutting hypothesis, as the media entities that stood to gain from the giveaway, the network television stations, ignored the issue over the nine-year period of study, while the newspapers placed it low on their agendas and CNN only ran one relevant broadcast. She also found that when the newspapers covered the issue, more than 44% of their hard-news coverage was either "negative" or "very negative" compared to only 4% of "positive" coverage. These findings suggest that media organizations that stand to benefit from policy issues may not necessarily like to bring attention to themselves, while those that do not stand to benefit may not only provide more coverage but more negative coverage as well.[212] These two examples illustrate how forces from the organizational level or within the media (e.g., owners/executives or managers who make editorial decisions) and external sources (e.g., government legislation involving the media) may lead to instances of agenda cutting.

---

[211]Price, "Does Power Change the News?."

[212]Colistra, "Out of Sight, Out of Mind: Agenda Cutting in the Mass Media."

<u>Journalists' Prejudices</u>

Finally, Wober claimed that agenda cutting may occur because of prejudices of journalists and news organizations. This reasoning falls in line with White's 1950 gatekeeping study in which he suggested that "Mr. Gates" used subjective judgment, including his own personal prejudices, when deciding what stories to omit.[213] It is important to note, however, that this type of cutting by journalists may be unintentional.

In short, agenda cutting may occur by (1) placing an item low on the news agenda; (2) removing it from the agenda once it is there; or (3) completely ignoring it by never putting it on the agenda in the first place. Because the concept of agenda cutting has been examined by few researchers, the current study attempts to further develop and expand this approach. As mentioned, one aspect of the current research specifically focuses on how often and under what conditions agenda cutting is most like to occur. As with the other potential influences on content just discussed, attention is concentrated on internal and external sources that may help cause this phenomenon. By beginning with the potential causes of agenda cutting, scholars will be better able to understand this approach and begin to form research questions regarding motives behind "cutting" certain topics, stories, and issues from the media agenda; its effects on news coverage; and its possible outcomes on audience cognition.

In summary, the sources of influences discussed earlier in this chapter—extramedia, organizational, within-media organization—may attempt to affect news content and coverage decisions. For the purposes of this study, *extramedia influences* consisted of pressures from advertisers, public relations practitioners, and political and governmental sources. The initial *organizational influences* included in the present research were economic pressures,

---

[213]White, "The 'Gate Keeper'."

pressures from owners and/or executives, and the level of ownership concentration. The initial sources of *within-media organization influences* were staff-size pressures and indirect and direct management pressures. These sources may try to affect coverage decisions and content decisions by trying to (1) influence or build the media agenda (agenda building); (2) influence the angle of a story; that is, influence the frame or manner in which it is to be covered (frame building); or (3) influence coverage decisions and content by convincing the media *not* to cover a story or a particular aspect of it (agenda cutting).

Study Justification

While numerous studies have focused on how the media set the audience agenda, fewer have taken a step back to get to the root of matter: how the media's agenda is influenced in the first place. Although some research has examined these different forces and their potential effects separately (e.g., public relations or advertising pressures effects on building the media's agenda or frames), no research to date has studied how various influences may simultaneously affect news coverage or content decisions. In other words, no known studies have considered the larger, more comprehensive picture.

Furthermore, few studies regarding the process of frame building have been undertaken. In fact, Scheufele argued that "no evidence has…been systematically collected about how various factors impact the structural qualities of news in terms of framing."[214]

Likewise, little research has concentrated on the much-ignored, but important, phenomenon of agenda cutting. Although Wober coined the term and established the baseline knowledge for this type of research, only two known studies have attempted to measure this "new" area. Media Tenor's study used a media-effects approach and focused

---

[214]Scheufele, "Framing as a Theory of Media Effects," 109.

on agenda cutting's effects on audience opinion of the threat of mad cow disease.[215] Colistra, on the other hand, attempted to develop the concept as a theoretical approach in her exploratory study of mainstream media coverage of long-term media policy issue.[216] To do so, she tried to show that agenda cutting exists, which, like Wober,[217] she determined that it does. Still, other literature has touched on the subject without specifically identifying it as agenda cutting. For example, a Pew survey found that approximately 35% of journalists and news executives of local media reported that they "sometimes" or "commonly" avoided stories that could damage advertisers, which amounts to self-censorship.[218] Because of the scant attention paid to these important topics, each of the aforementioned areas needs to be explored to determine how internal and external forces attempt to affect news content and coverage decisions. This type of research is especially pertinent in the current media landscape where news workers are faced with multiple competing loyalties, which are at least partially due to increased economic constraints and bottom-line pressures.

The current study expands on previous research in agenda and frame building and further develops and tests the concept of agenda cutting. Specifically, this research's goal is to determine through what forces and under what conditions the media are most likely to be influenced and to what effect on news content and coverage decisions. That is, how and under what conditions do external and internal forces attempt to influence the media and content decisions, and to what effect are they successful at doing so?

---

[215]"Media and Mad Cow Disease."

[216]Colistra, "Out of Sight, Out of Mind: Agenda Cutting in the Mass Media."

[217]Wober, "Agenda Cutting."

[218]"Self Censorship: How Often and Why."

This research examined potential effects on content by using a national survey of local television news reporters. TV news reporters are an important group to question regarding attempted influences and effects on content decisions for several reasons. First, as mentioned earlier, Shoemaker and Reese hypothesized that broadcast media are more sensitive to economic concerns than print media because nearly all of their income originates from advertising.[219] Thus, pressures and influences should be most evident in the television industry, although they are likely to occur, perhaps to a somewhat lesser extent, in the print sector as well. Second, reporters are a better group to survey on these particular issues than, say, news directors, producers, or other executives because they may be more likely to give candid responses since they are further removed from the business side of news operations.[220] Third, reporters' transient nature increases the likelihood that they will not cater their answers to show loyalty to and/or protection for their current news organization. Therefore, they are more likely to offer more open assessments. Finally, reporters are less likely to suffer from survey fatigue,[221] as many studies involving broadcast workers focus on surveys of news directors and/or producers.[222]

Using aspects from Shoemaker and Reese's hierarchical model of influences, along with research and examples from agenda-building and framing literature and media surveys, a comprehensive model of media influences and outcomes was tested (See Figure 2.3—

---

[219]Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message*, 2d ed., 267.

[220] Personal communication in January 2007 with Charlie Tuggle, broadcast professional and associate professor of broadcasting at UNC-Chapel Hill; See also Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message*, 2d ed., 265-267

[221]M. P. Couper, "Web Surveys: A Review of Issues and Approaches," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 64 (2000): 464-494.

[222]Terry Adams and Johanna Cleary, "Surfable Surveys: Using Web-Based Technology to Reach Newsroom Respondents," *Electronic News* 1, no. 2 (2007): 103-120.

Hypothesized Model of Influences on Media Content (IOMC)). This first phase of the

analysis examined the overall picture and assessed possible pressures on media content

decisions and potential outcomes of these influences. Specifically, the overall model

evaluated within-media organization influences as mediating the relationships between

extramedia and organizational influences and the proposed content outcomes. This

systematic and comprehensive approach helps to improve our understanding of the different

types of pressures media organizations face every day. This model also helps to advance our

knowledge of agenda building, frame building, and agenda cutting in the news industry.
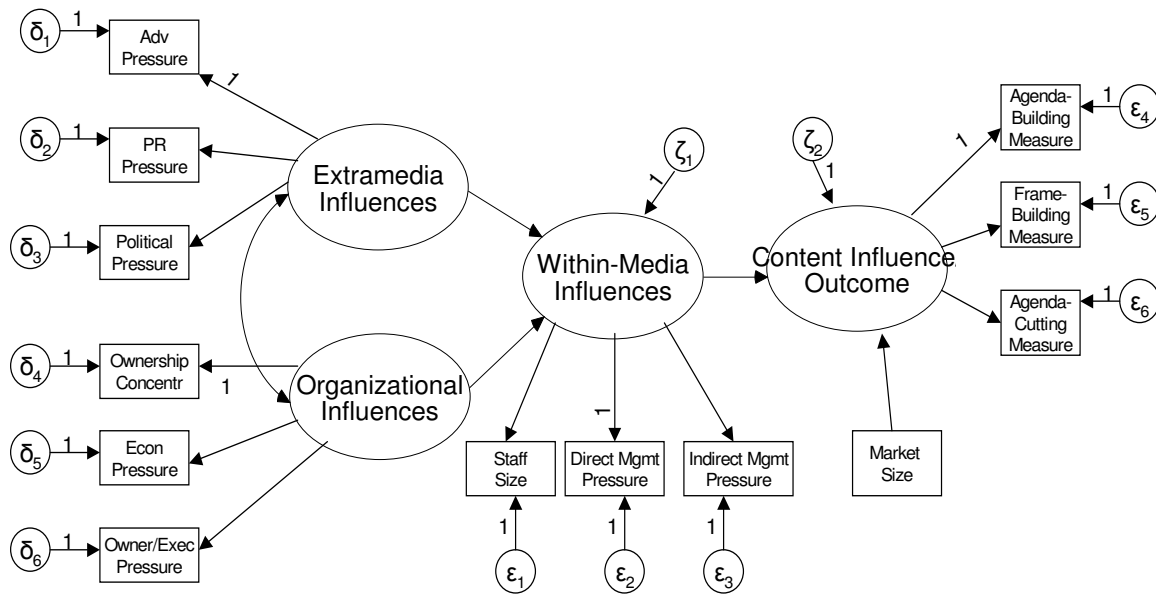
Figure 2.3. Hypothesized Model of Influences on Media Content (IOMC)

Note: The ovals in the model are unobserved latent constructs. The rectangles represent observed variables. These observed, measured variables are used to measure the unobserved latent constructs. The model also contains errors, depicted as δ (deltas) and ε (epsilons), as well as disturbance terms, shown as ζ (zetas). These errors and disturbance terms account for measurement error, which can lead to bias in the estimation of the regression coefficients.

Hypotheses & Research Questions

The second phase of the study addressed hypotheses and research questions dealing with specific relationships between variables that were not directly ascertainable by testing the overall model in the first stage of the project. Specific parameters were explored through the more traditional methods of correlation and multiple regression analyses to test the plausibility, strength, and direction of relationships not directly presented in the model. Examining these specific relationships helps to improve our current knowledge base of agenda-building constructs presented by Shoemaker and Reese, as well as advance existing

70

literature regarding the strength and association of potential influences on media content decisions and the sources of influence that are strongest in these decisions.

Public relations agenda-building research suggests that if a media entity has an inadequate staff to fill the day's news hole a station may rely on outside sources, such as information subsidies from public relations practitioners, to compensate for this lack of "man power."[223] Although this observation has been noted in previous research (e.g., Gandy), it has not been evaluated from the perspective of the current study, which measures staff size pressures by assessing reporters' opinions on inadequate staff size and its effects on content.

Scholars have also found that staff size is linked to news quality or overall industry performance.[224] For example, Lacy, Fico, and Simon found that staff size was positively correlated with performance in the newspaper industry.[225] In other words, larger staff size means better news performance. Further evidence in the literature shows that journalists tend to view staff size reductions and an inadequate number of staff working at a news organization unfavorably.[226] Given this evidence, the staff size pressure measure was evaluated with regard to public relations pressures and effects on news content and coverage decisions. Therefore, the following hypotheses were posed:

---

[223] For example, see Turk, "Information Subsidies and Influence;" Turk, "Information Subsidies and Media Content;" and Gandy, "Information Subsidies."

[224] For example, see Busterna, "Television Station Ownership Effects on Programming and Idea Diversity"; Lacy, Fico, and Simon, "Relationship among Economic, Newsroom, and Content Variables."

[225] Lacy, Fico, and Simon, "Relationship among Economic, Newsroom, and Content Variables."

[226] For example, see Underwood and Stamm, "Balancing Business with Journalism"; Busterna, "Television Station Ownership Effects on Programming and Idea Diversity"; Lacy, Fico, and Simon, "Relationship among Economic, Newsroom, and Content Variables."

H1: Staff size pressures will have a positive correlation with public relations pressures.
That is, reporters who believe that an inadequate or reduced staff size can have negative effects coverage will also report more instances of public relations pressure.

H2: Staff size pressures will have a positive correlation with overall effects/influences on content decisions.
That is, reporters who believe that an inadequate or reduced staff size can have negative effects coverage will also report more instances of influences on content and coverage decisions.

The proposed model in Figure 2.3 includes market size as a control variable. The aforementioned hypotheses, however, do not. Therefore, the following research question was posed to provide a more detailed examination of these relationships.

RQ1: Does adding market size as a control variable affect the strength of the relationships in the first two hypotheses (i.e., (H1) Staff Size Pressures and PR Pressures and (H2) Staff Size Pressures and Overall Influence/Outcome on Content)?

In the television industry, stations are categorized into designated market areas (DMAs), which are classified by number. The largest-market stations hold the 1-25 spots, while the smallest-market stations are generally in the hundreds. Past literature has suggested that smaller-market media may be more susceptible to advertising influences.[227] Furthermore, as Shoemaker and Reese have argued, broadcast media are even more vulnerable to these types of pressures because they rely on advertisers for profits.[228] On the other hand, larger-market media may be more likely to face political pressures. This is because as a media organization becomes more concentrated, which is typically associated

---

[227]For example, see Soley and Craig, "Advertising Pressures on Newspapers"; Hays and Reisner, "Feeling the Heat from Advertisers."

[228]Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message*, 2d ed., 267.

72

with larger markets, the owners or executives may become have stronger social ties with some outside company, as noted by Shoemaker and Reese. Connections with politicians and governmental officials may also be included. Still, these types of potential influences have not been closely examined. Based on the evidence in literature, four hypotheses were posed. Market size was reverse-coded in the data file so a larger DMA number corresponded with larger-market media, and vice versa. This change is reflected in the hypotheses and in the model. All measures of attempted influences and outcomes on content are based on reporters' perceptions.

Market size will have a…

H3:   negative relationship with overall effects/influences on content decisions;

H4:   negative relationship with advertising influences;

H5:   a positive relationship with political pressures; and

H6:   a negative relationship with public relations pressures.

As mentioned, research has suggested that extramedia pressures and organizational pressures influence content. Although scholars have proposed that advertisers, owner/executives are strong sources of influence, little to no research has examined what forces are the strongest predictors of influences on news content.[229] Thus, this study considered the following research questions and hypotheses.

---

[229]For example, see Soley and Craig, "Advertising Pressures on Newspapers"; Hays and Reisner, "Feeling the Heat from Advertisers"; McManus, *Market-Driven Journalism*; Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message*; Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message*, 2d ed.

RQ 2: After taking into account the other two components, how well does each measure of extramedia influences predict outcomes/influences of news content decisions? That is, what is the unique contribution of each extramedia influence measure on the content decision outcomes after partialing out the contributions of the other two measures?

H7: The advertiser pressures measure is the strongest extramedia predictor of outcomes/influences on news content and coverage decisions.

RQ3: After taking into account the other two components, how well does each measure of organizational influences predict outcomes/influences of news content decisions? That is, what is the unique contribution of each organizational influence measure on the content decision outcomes after partialing out the contributions of the other two measures?

H8: The owner/executive pressures measure is the strongest organizational predictor of outcomes/influences on news content and coverage decisions.

Finally, as noted in the literature review, the phenomenon of agenda cutting has been mentioned by few scholars and has been researched by even fewer. One of the goals of the current study was to develop and expand this concept as a theoretical approach. To better understand agenda cutting, the following research questions and hypotheses were posed:

RQ4: How well does each measure of extramedia influences predict the level of agenda cutting after taking into account the other two components? That is, what is the unique contribution of each measure on the agenda-cutting effects on content after partialing out the contributions of the other two measures?

H9: The advertiser pressures measure is the strongest extramedia predictor of instances of agenda cutting.

RQ5: How well does each measure of organizational influences predict the level of agenda cutting after taking into account the other two components? That is, what is the unique contribution of each measure on the agenda-cutting effects on content after partialing out the contributions of the other two measures?

H10: The owner/executive pressures measure is the strongest organizational predictor of instances of agenda cutting.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

A national survey of television reporters was conducted to examine external and internal influences on news content and coverage decisions. The current chapter provides a detailed explanation of the data-gathering process, followed by the procedures used to implement the survey. The survey instrument itself is then discussed, along with a description of the respondents. Finally, all of the study's variables and their respective scales are operationalized, followed by the data-analysis procedures for both phases of the study. Particular attention is paid to the explication of structural equation modeling, the method used in phase one.

Data-Gathering Process

Data for this study were obtained through a Web-based survey of television reporters. A Web survey was chosen because of monetary and time constraints for the project. This method, however, has proved successful for this industry.[230] This is likely because television professionals work in a busy newsroom environment, and this type of survey allows for a quick and a virtually immediate response. Furthermore, the survey could be taken from any computer, thus allowing for more privacy than other survey methods, such as telephone

---

[230]For example, see Johanna Lynn Cleary, "Newsroom Diversity, Professional Development, and Staff Retention: An Integrated Approach" (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2004); Terry L. Adams, "Networked News: An Examination of Communication between Technical and Editorial Staff in Television News" (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2003); Adams and Cleary, "Surfable Surveys."

questionnaires. As mentioned in the previous chapter, TV reporters were chosen for several reasons, including their likelihood of giving more candid responses because (1) they are further removed from the business side of news operations,[231] and (2) the transient nature of the profession increases the chances that they will not cater their answers to show loyalty to and/or protection for their current news organization. Reporters are also less likely to be bombarded by surveys, as many studies involving broadcast workers focus on news directors and/or producers.[232] Thus, reporters are less likely to suffer from survey fatigue.

Because structural equation modeling is a large-sample technique, an adequate list of potential respondents was required. Furthermore, an even larger sample size was needed for the current study because a model-building SEM approach was used. Briefly, this method requires randomly splitting the data file to use the first half of the data for a more exploratory approach, while saving the second half of the data for confirming the modifications made during the first phase. This process is explained in greater detail in the "Data Analysis" section presented later in this chapter. In the subsequent paragraphs, the sampling frame that was used to gather potential respondents and the sampling process are outlined, followed by an explanation of the Web-survey system.

Reporters for the survey were chosen by a two-stage process. To identify potential participants, a list of U.S. television stations was compiled from Bacon's MediaSource online. Bacon's is a subscription-based service used to obtain an extensive list and updated contact information for media organizations and news workers. The information on the list is

---

[231]Personal communication in January 2007 with Charlie Tuggle, broadcast professional and associate professor of broadcasting at UNC-Chapel Hill; See also Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message*, 2d ed., 265-267

[232]Adams and Cleary, "Surfable Surveys."

frequently updated, and the service is used by advertisers, researchers, public relations professionals, media workers, corporations, and others to identify and contact those people working in any segment of the media industry. Several categories of stations were omitted from this list, including Spanish-language channels, PBS, stations without news departments or a news team, and other specialized channels such as religious and home-shopping formats (e.g., QVC). Some stations listed on the Bacon's site had news departments, but no reporters were listed. To reduce coverage error, these stations' Web sites were consulted and general assignment reporters' contact information, when listed, was recorded for inclusion in the survey.

Second, all general reporters (i.e., those not listed as specific types of reporters, such as "crime," "bureau," or "investigative" reporter) from each station were considered. Thus, this "sampling" procedure resembles a census approach, rather than a typical sampling process. Only those with specific e-mail addresses (e.g., **j.doe@wxyz.com** and not **news@wxyz.com**) were eligible for participation in the study. The final list resulted in 2074 potential respondents. After the completed list was obtained, contact information was gathered to send a pre-notification letter by mail and to send the actual e-mail invitation with the survey link included. This information was provided on the Bacon's Web site.

The Qualtrics Web-based survey software, which is supported and provided by the Odum Institute of Social Science Research at UNC-Chapel Hill, was used to implement the project. This program allowed for streamlined responses that were eventually downloaded to an SPSS data file for analysis. Each reporter obtained from the selection process was automatically assigned a different link to access the survey by the Qualtrics program. This feature allowed the researcher to track responses and data, and it also helped to prevent those

who had already responded to the survey from receiving additional e-mail reminders. Furthermore, access codes and passwords were not required, so it was easier for respondents to access and complete the survey. This feature likely helped to increase the number of responses.

Implementation Procedures

Recruiting Participants

This study employed many of the techniques suggested by Dillman in his widely cited survey book, *Mail and Internet Surveys: The Tailored Design Method.*[233] To solicit participants for the study, a pre-notification letter was sent via postal mail on Friday, Feb. 9, 2007 (See Appendix 1. Mail Pre-Notification/Invitation Letter). The initial invitation was sent via mail because Dillman has found that using different modes in the survey implementation process improves response rates.[234] Cleary also suggested sending a personalized paper letter to all potential survey respondents before sending out the first e-mail message with Web-survey information.[235] Using this approach likely kept some potential participants from deleting the survey e-mail message when it was sent, and it reinforced the fact that they were not being "spammed."

The letter was personally addressed to each potential respondent, and some of the information and wording suggested by Dillman[236] and Cleary[237] were used. Dillman has

---

[233]Don A. Dillman, *Mail and Internet Surveys: The Tailored Design Method*, 2d ed. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2000).

[234]Ibid, 244, 367.

[235]Cleary, "Newsroom Diversity, Professional Development, and Staff Retention," 118-119.

[236]Dillman, *Mail and Internet Surveys,* 162.

[237]Cleary, "Newsroom Diversity, Professional Development, and Staff Retention," 126.

noted that survey recipients should feel as if they were specifically chosen to participate.[238] He generally "expects to achieve a collective impact of five to eight percentage points from the use of personalized elements."[239] Similarly, Cleary found that the news directors and producers in her study seemed to respond better to this "personal touch," as "many agreed to participate" after she explained that only a selected few were chosen for her study.[240]

Other methods were also used in the letter to potentially increase the response rate. The letter was printed on official letterhead of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. A postscript was also used and was presented in boldface type in the letter. The postscript indicated that participants also had the option of completing the survey by mail or by telephone. As suggested by Dillman, the letter was sent by first-class stamped, rather than bulk, mail.[241] Recipients were also offered a non-monetary incentive, an executive summary of the findings, regardless of whether they chose to participate. Cleary found this step useful, as 20% of her participants requested a copy.[242] Although Dillman has recommended that, when possible, the researcher should provide a real signature in contrasting ink on each letter,[243] doing so was not realistic for a larger project such as the current study. Thus, a scanned signature was included in the signature block.

---

[238]Dillman, *Mail and Internet Surveys,* 368.

[239]Ibid, 164-165.

[240]Cleary, "Newsroom Diversity, Professional Development, and Staff Retention," 119.

[241]Dillman, *Mail and Internet Surveys,* 171-173.

[242]Cleary, "Newsroom Diversity, Professional Development, and Staff Retention," 54.

[243]Dillman, *Mail and Internet Surveys,* 164-165.

Official Invitation and Follow-ups

Six days after the pre-notification/invitation letter was sent by mail, the official e-mail invitation with the much of the same information was sent to the work e-mail addresses obtained from the sampling frame (See Appendix 2. E-mail Invitation/Recruitment Message for Potential Survey Participants). The e-mail invitation was sent on Thursday, Feb. 15, 2007. This particular day of the week was chosen because research has shown that e-mail messages sent on Wednesdays, Thursdays, or Tuesdays are more likely to be opened and thoroughly read.[244] The official e-mail invitation included a respondent-specific link to the survey's consent to participate page (See Appendix 3. Consent for Web Survey) and the actual survey (See Appendix 4. Web Survey of Television Reporters). The specific links were generated by the Qualtrics software system.

Three reminder messages were sent for a total of five contacts (postal mail pre-notification letter; e-mail invitation; and reminders one, two, and three). Recipients who had not yet completed the survey were sent the first reminder message on Wednesday, Feb. 21, which was seven days after the initial e-mail contact (See Appendix 5. First E-mail Reminder Message). As mentioned previously, the Qualtrics Web-based survey software keeps track of those who have and have not completed the survey to prevent unnecessary messages from being sent to potential respondents. A second reminder was sent to non-responders approximately one week later on Thursday, March 1 (See Appendix 6. Second E-mail Reminder Message). Finally, a third e-mail reminder was distributed six days later on Wednesday, March 7 (See Appendix 7. Third E-mail Reminder Message). Following

---

[244]Cleary, "Newsroom Diversity, Professional Development, and Staff Retention," 120. Cleary obtained this information from the eMarketer Web site; however, the link to the specific article from which the original information was obtained was no longer valid. Cleary claims that Wednesday is the most effective days, followed by Tuesday or Thursday.

Dillman's recommendation for personalizing messages, the official electronic invitation and the reminders began with each respondent's first name. The study, survey, and all communication with respondents were approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (See Appendix 12. Notice of IRB Approval).

Targeted Response Rate

Although a few previous e-mail studies have achieved higher response rates of about 50%, this percentage was only achieved after several contacts and much time and labor on the part of the researcher.[245] Furthermore, these studies focused on television news directors and/or producers—not reporters, as with the current project—and dealt with a considerably smaller sample (approximately 150 as opposed to more than 600 participants for the current study). Thus, the labor spent in making several phone contacts and pleas was simply not feasible—neither time-wise nor in the economical sense. Finally, the 30% targeted response rate for the current study is also comparable to that achieved by the Pew Research Center's surveys of similar groups.

Survey Instrument and Operationalization of Variables

The Web-survey consisted of 70 questions (See Appendix 4. Web Survey of Television Reporters).[246] A pretest of academics with extensive television experience was conducted, and it was found that the survey took an average of 13 minutes to complete, although reporters who participated in the actual survey oftentimes reported that it took less

---

[245]Cleary, "Newsroom Diversity, Professional Development, and Staff Retention"; Adams, "Networked News"; Cleary, "Newsroom Diversity, Professional Development, and Staff Retention"; see also Adams and Cleary, "Surfable Surveys."

[246]The survey questions were not numbered in the actual Web survey. They are numbered in Appendix 4 for clarity.

time. The pretest was also used to check for ambiguities in questioning, word choice, and

other issues that may deter respondents from completing the survey, and minor adjustments

in wording were made.[247]

As mentioned previously, a mail pre-notification letter was sent to a total of 2,074

general reporters. Of those, six were returned as undeliverable, resulting in a total possible

sample of 2068. Eleven people requested a mail survey, which was sent with a postage-paid

return envelope. A total of seven were completed for inclusion in the analysis: five were

returned by mail, one by fax, and one was taken on the Web via the respondent's survey link.

Additionally, two reporters requested to take the survey by phone.

Of the total sample of 2068, the data file contained 618 usable responses, resulting in

a 30% response rate. This process is discussed in more detail in the "Missing Values and

Data Screening" section later in this chapter. It is important to note that the beginning of the

Web survey took place during a hectic time for those in the television industry—a sweeps

period. Sweeps periods, which occur four times per year, measure ratings simultaneously in

all 210 local television markets in the nation. The data from the ratings surveys are used to

set local advertising rates, among other things. Thus, during this time stations often air

dramatic themes or events in their sitcoms or focus on titillating news stories, such as

investigative pieces, to attract more viewers. [248] For 2007, February sweeps ran from

February 1 through February 28. As mentioned earlier, the survey was launched on February

---

[247]Data from the pretest were not used for the analysis.

[248]"What are the sweeps periods?," *Nielsen Media*, http://www.nielsenmedia.com/FAQ/sweeps.html# What%20are%20the%20sweep%20periods? (accessed February 20, 2007). According to Nielsen Media, "The term "sweep" dates back to the beginning of local television measurements in the 1950s and refers to how Nielsen Media Research mailed and processed diaries to sample households starting with the East Coast and sweeping across the nation."

15 and was closed on March 14. Despite this potential drawback, the targeted response rate was still met, suggesting that the topic was of importance to many reporters.[249]

About the Respondents

From the usable sample (n=618), participants were 51% male and 47% female; 2% declined to answer. Reporters in the 25-34 year-old age group made up the majority of respondents with 51%, followed by those 35-44 years of age with 21.3%. Twelve and a half percent of the participants were between 45 and 55 years old, and younger reporters aged 18-24 (9.3%) and those 55 or older (6%) represented the fewest number of respondents. The average respondent had worked in the television industry for approximately 13 years (mean=12.76; SD=9.04), and 65% had been employed at his/her current station from 1 to 5 years. A majority of the participants were from the larger DMAs, as 69% worked for stations in the 1-25 markets and 11% in the 26-50 markets. The remaining 20% of participating reporters served stations in the smaller DMAs (51+). Survey participants also tended to work in larger newsrooms, with 73% reporting that their stations' news department consisted of 31 or more people. Most of the respondents (61%) worked for publicly owned media entities, and 83% worked for groups owning five or more stations. Furthermore, 65% of the participating reporters claimed that their stations' owners also owned other types of media (e.g., newspapers). Thus, the demographic information suggests that the majority of respondents worked for more concentrated media entities. A complete account of the respondent demographic information is shown in Appendix 8 (Respondent Demographic Information).

---

[249]Several reporters also communicated their appreciation for investigation into the topic.

Before proceeding, it is important to point out the differences between the sample (the survey respondents) and the population (the list of reporters to whom the survey was sent). The only demographic-type of data provided by Bacon's MediaSource, the sampling frame, were gender (assessed by using the listed salutation) and DMA. A small, but inconsequential, difference regarding the gender of the survey respondents was found. The gender makeup of the respondents was 51% male and 47% female (2% declined to answer). For the population, however, the gender represented 55/45 female-male split. Although the difference is not significant, it is worth noting for the sake of diligence. The DMAs, on the other hand, showed more marked differences between the population and the sample. The list consisted of 40% of reporters representing the largest, 1-25, markets, as compared to 69% of the survey participants. Smaller disparities surfaced in the other DMA groups, with a 17 percentage-point difference within the 51+ DMAs (37% in population list versus 20% of the respondents) and a 11.5 percentage-point difference in the 26-50 DMA spots (22.5% for the population list and 11% of the respondents).

As previously mentioned, this study used a model-building approach that required a large sample. Briefly, a larger number of cases were needed to randomly split the data file in half to use the first file for exploring and modifying the model, and the second subfile for confirming the changes made in the model in the first step. Since there are only a given number of "general" reporters, all those listed in Bacon's MediaSource meeting the specified criteria were considered for survey participation. Therefore, stratifying based on the population was not possible. This population-sample discrepancy is listed as a limitation for the study, and it is further discussed in Chapter 5.

Operationalization of Variables

The survey consisted of two main scale measures (Strongly Disagree/Strongly Agree and Almost Never/Very Often), both of which used a 7-point Likert-type format. In most instances, the questions were ordered so scale items did not appear continuously. Some items were also reverse-ordered to help prevent response bias. Survey items were worded to assess respondents' perceptions of situations in typical television newsrooms—not just their own. This general approach was used to encourage more candid responses, and it is a technique often used by large-scale research outfits, such as Pew Research Center. Some minor demographic-types of questions, such as ownership situation, were used to evaluate the respondents' particular station. Each of the latent construct's indicators was assessed for internal consistency and reliability using Cronbach's alpha.[250] The latent variables in the survey and model are as follows: (1) extramedia influences, (2) organizational influences, (3) within-media influences, and (4) content influence/outcome. A list of observed variables, their corresponding latent constructs (just listed), along with the specific survey questions used to evaluate them is shown in Table 3.1.

Extramedia Influences

A total of 12 questions were used to measure extramedia influences, which is one of the independent variables in the study. The observed indicators (measures) used to measure different components of this latent construct are (1) advertising pressures, (2) public relations pressure, and (3) political/governmental pressures. Each of these observed variables were measured using a series of questions related to each, and they are now discussed.

---

[250]The means, standard deviations, and Cronbach's alpha values that follow are based upon the "cleaned" data file in which outliers and cases missing values on more than 30% of the measured variables were removed. The criteria for omission are discussed in more detail in the "Missing Values and Data Screening" section presented later in this chapter.

Advertising Pressures. Four questions (7 & 12-14) were used to evaluate instances of

advertiser pressures, and the scale achieved a Cronbach's alpha of .87 (M=14.01, SD=5.77).

Previous research has suggested that advertisers, in at least some instances, attempt to

influence content in various ways, including trying to influence (1) the media to cover or

emphasize certain stories, (2) the manner in which a story or topic is covered, or (3) the

media to not cover a story or topic. The survey questions were used to assess these

pressures.

Public Relations Pressures. Three questions (42-44) were used to assess instances of

public relations pressures.[251] Practitioners may attempt to influence content in similar ways

as advertisers. Thus, similar survey questions represent public relations pressures. Previous

research also suggests that public relations professionals may be able to influence the media

by distributing information subsidies, such as news releases and VNRs. The receipt and use

of these materials were also evaluated in the survey. The alpha for the three-item scale was

.81 (M=14.86, SD=4.25).

Political/Governmental Pressures. Five questions (22, 25, & 32-34) were used to

evaluate pressures from politicians and government officials.[252] The four-item scale had an

---

[251]Originally, five questions were posed to assess instances of pressures from public relations practitioners. Two questions (35 & 39), however, were found to reduce the reliability and internal consistency of the scale. After careful review of all scale questions, the two questions were found inappropriate to group with the other scale items because one was used to measure the station's actual *use* of VNRs and the other was used to measure how often the stations *received* them. The questions did not seem to be measuring the same underlying concept of PR pressures, as the others were more specific. Thus, these questions were removed and were retained for the use in a future study.

[252]Seven questions were originally used to assess political/governmental official pressures. Two of the questions (24 & 26) found to reduce the slightly reduce reliability and internal consistency of the scale because they seemed to be assessing different aspects of political pressures (seven-item alpha=.784). After further review of the questions, the researcher decided to remove these items from the scale to improve reliability, especially because the squared multiple correlations were much lower than the others. They were, however, retained for use in future studies. Another scale item, question 25, had a lower squared multiple correlation than the other four items in the revised scale, but it was retained because (a) reliability was still high with its

alpha of .82 (M=22.70, SD=6.64). As with the advertising and public relations pressure

measures, several questions were posed to assess just how these sources attempt to influence

news content and coverage decisions. The literature also suggests that these sources may

also try to influence the media by providing stations with leaks, prepackaged news, and off-

the-record interviews. These areas have largely been ignored other than anecdotal examples.

Thus, they were explored in the survey.

Table 3.1. *Latent Constructs and Observed Variables (Indicators) with*
Corresponding Survey Questions

Variable	Survey Questions
Extramedia Influences	
Advertising Pressure	7, 12-14
Public Relations Pressure	42-44
Political/Governmental Pressure	22, 25, 32-34
Organizational Influences	
Level of Concentration	65, 67
Owner/Executive Pressure	19-21
Economic Pressure	5-6, 45-47
Within-Media Org. Influence	
Staff Size Pressure Measure	1, 3
Direct Management Pressure	48, 50, 52
Indirect Management Pressure	57, 59, 61
Market Size (reverse-coded DMA rank)	Info. obtained from sampling
Content Influence/Outcome	
Level Agenda Building	9, 16, 27, 29, 36, 40, 49, 55, 58
Level Frame Building	10, 17, 28, 30, 37, 51, 56, 60
Level Agenda Cutting	8, 11, 15, 18, 23, 31, 38, 53, 54, 62

inclusion and, more importantly, (b) because it measured a different aspect of political/governmental pressures
than the other items. Thus, it contributed information that the other items did not.

<u>Organizational Influences</u>

Ten survey questions assessed organizational influences. The observed indicators

used to measure different components of this latent construct are (1) level of ownership

concentration, (2) owner/executive pressures, and (3) economic pressures.

Level of Ownership Concentration. Two questions (65 & 67) evaluated the

concentration of ownership of each respondent's television station.[253] The questions were

straightforward and involved type of ownership. Item 65 had a range of 1 to 4, so question 67

had to be recoded to establish an equal scale for the items since it only involved two usable

points. The alpha was .74 (M=6.31, SD=2.08).

Owner/Executive Pressures. Research indicates that owners and top-level executives

try, and are successful at, influencing content decisions at some news organizations. As with

the measures of extramedia influences, these owner/executives may attempt to influence the

types of stories that are covered/not covered, or the angles taken on certain topics or issues.

Three questions (19-21) assessed this source of influence, and the scale achieved a

Cronbach's alpha of .94 (M=8.86, SD=4.56).[254]

Economic Pressures. Five survey questions (5-6 & 45-47) evaluated the levels of

economic pressures faced by journalists. Previous survey research indicates that many

journalists believe that bottom-line pressures are seriously hurting the quality of news

---

[253]Originally, three survey items measured this scale, but one question (66) was found to reduce the alpha of the scale (three-item alpha=.66). This "problem" question measures whether the owners of the stations also own other types of media (e.g., newspapers). The question was dropped from the scale, but it is reported in the respondent demographics section.

[254]Four items were originally proposed to measure owner/executive pressures; however, question 4 (after it was appropriately recoded), did not group as well with the other items. That is, although the alpha level was quite high (four-item alpha=.852), the squared multiple correlation value for this question was much lower than the others (.153 compared to .72 - .84). After closer inspection, this item was found to be different from the others in that it was more of a general, sweeping question. In contrast, the others assessed more specific instances of owner/executive pressures. Given this information, the item was omitted from the scale.

coverage. The literature also suggests that these pressures are more prevalent in the

television industry. The alpha for the five-item scale was .78 (M=19.76, SD=6.21).

<u>Within-Media Influences</u>

A total of 8 questions measured reporters' feelings concerning staff size pressures, as

well as their assessments of direct and indirect management pressures. These observed

measures of within-media influences are outlined in the paragraphs that follow.

Staff Size Pressure Measure. Previous research concerning staff size suggests that it

is linked to quality of coverage and industry performance. Some studies have found that an

inadequate staff size may have detrimental effects on news content. Many media

organizations, however, have been forced to cut staff because of bottom-line pressures. Not

surprisingly, journalists tend to view inadequate staff size, which is typically due to staffing

cuts, in a negative light. Two survey items (1 & 3) were used to measure journalists' opinions

on particular staffing statements.[255] The scale had an alpha of .68 (M=12.42, SD=1.84).

Although one question (68) was used to assess the size of the news staff at each respondent's

current station, it was not used for the scale. Instead, it is reported in the "About the

Respondents" section earlier in this chapter.

Direct and Indirect Management Pressures. Six questions assessed pressures from

management within the news organization. Three questions (48, 50, & 52) evaluated

instances of direct forms of management pressures, such as a superior directly instructing

journalists to cover a story from a certain angle. The alpha for this scale was .72 (M=12.01,

SD=4.53). Three questions (57, 59, & 61) asked respondents how often indirect forms of

---

[255]Although three questions were originally posed for inclusion in the scale, one item (Q 2) was found
to reduce internal consistency and reliability (three-item alpha =.44). After closer inspection, it was determined
that this item instead measured something else—using advertising and/or public relations material because of
inadequate staff size. Thus, the item was removed from the scale and was retained for future analyses.

manager pressures occur in typical newsrooms. This type of pressure may include indirect

signals such as yawning at a story idea. The scale for *indirect management pressures*

achieved a Cronbach's alpha of .83 (M=11.80, SD=5.04).

Market Size

In this study, market size is an observed variable that is expected to affect perceptions

of influences on media content. This information consists of the DMA rank of the station for

which the respondent works, and it was obtained in the sampling process via Bacon's

MediaSource. As previously mentioned, smaller DMAs represent the *largest* markets. To

avoid confusion, this variable was reverse coded so that smaller DMA ranks represent

smaller markets, and vice versa, and it was labeled as "Market Size" in the model and for

addressing the hypotheses posed in the study. DMA rank, however, is represented in its true,

original form in the "About the Respondents" section earlier in this chapter and in the

"Demographics" section in the appendices.

Content Influences/Outcomes

A total of 27 survey items assessed how content is influenced as a result of the

various types of internal and external pressures just discussed. Nine questions (9, 16, 27, 29,

36, 40, 49, 55, & 58) evaluated the outcome of *agenda building*. As mentioned throughout

the first two chapters, agenda building involves who or what is trying to influence the

media's news agenda. Survey items specifically evaluated how often external and internal

sources are successful at influencing media decisions of what stories to cover or emphasize.

The alpha for the nine-item scale was .80 (M=30.01, SD=9.43).

A second type of outcome, *frame building*, consists of instances in which the aforementioned sources influence the manner in which a story, topic, issue, or event is covered (e.g., the stance of an issue or the angle of a topic). Eight questions (10, 17, 28, 30, 37, 51, 56, & 60) assessed this specific form of influence on media content. The scale had an alpha of .80 (M=27.06, SD=8.38).

Finally, media content may also be influenced by internal and external forces attempting to convince news workers to *not* cover a particular story, topic, issue, or event. This process is known as *agenda cutting,* and it may occur by (1) keeping an item off the news agenda, (2) having it removed once it is there, or (3) affording it little attention (burying it). Ten survey items (8, 11, 15, 18, 23, 31, 38, 53, 54, & 62) assessed this content outcome, and the scale achieved a Cronbach's alpha of .84 (M=28.68, SD=10.19).

Data Analysis Procedures

As mentioned in the previous chapters, this study incorporated two distinct phases to examine through which internal and external forces and under what conditions the media are most likely to be influenced and to what effect on news content. The first part of this project evaluated the proposed model of influences on media content using SEM. The second approach employed the traditional statistical techniques of correlation and multiple regression analyses to address and evaluate the hypotheses and research questions posed in this study. Before moving to details of each phase, an overview of SEM is provided in the subsequent sections.

Structural Equation Modeling with Hybrid Models: A Brief Explication of the Technique

Structural equation modeling is an advanced quantitative procedure that has rarely been used in mass media research. It is an extension of the General Linear Model and is a generalized technique. That is, it "does not designate a single statistical technique but instead refers to a family of related procedures."[256] SEM is a powerful multivariate technique and can be considered a combination and/or extension of multiple regression, path analysis, and confirmatory factor analysis. It is more useful and powerful than conventional statistical approaches because it can (1) assess or correct for measurement error;[257] (2) incorporate both observed variables and latent (factors) variables, the latter of which is measured by observed indicators;[258] and (3) consider modeling of correlated errors, interrelations, and interactions/mediation effects.[259]

Hybrid models in SEM consist of both latent factors and measured variables. According to Brown, structural equation models can be separated into two main sections: the measurement model and the structural model. The measurement portion of the model consists of a confirmatory factory analysis (CFA), a more traditional approach.   This component indicates (1) the number of unobserved latent variables (i.e., factors), (2) how the specified indicators (measured variables) are related to, or loaded on, the latent factors, and (3) if and how the errors of these indicators are related. The second part of structural

---

[256]Rex B. Kline, *Principles and Practice of Structural Equation Modeling*, 2d ed. (New York: Guilford Press, 2005), 9.

[257]Barbara M. Byrne, *Structural Equation Modeling with AMOS: Basic Concepts, Applications, and Programming* (Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 2001), 3.

[258]Ibid, 4.

[259]"Structural Equation Modeling," http://www2.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/pa765/structur.htm (accessed September 3, 2006).

equation models is the structural portion, "which specifies how the various latent factors are related to one another (e.g., direct or indirect effects, no relationship, spurious relationship)."[260]

SEM as it is known today generally remained in obscurity until the 1970s because of advanced knowledge requirements and the complex statistical software packages needed for its utilization. The technique proliferated in the 1980s and 1990s largely because of software advances. Thus, it is considered a rather newer approach in the social and behavioral sciences.[261] Still, researchers have outlined a set of steps that should be taken in conducting the analysis. Kline has provided among the most detailed set of procedures that consist of specifying the model; model identification; selecting the variables, operationalizing the constructs, and screening and preparing the data file; model estimation; interpreting the parameter estimates; considering equivalent models; re-specifying the model, which is often necessary; and interpreting and reporting the results. Kline has also recommended completing two additional steps that are often left out of the process: replicating the results in future studies and actually applying the findings.[262] Model specification and identification are discussed in the subsequent paragraphs, followed by a section outlining the means by which missing data were addressed and a brief explication of the data-screening procedures. Variable measurement and operationalizations were just outlined in the preceding sections. The remaining procedures suggested by Kline are covered in the "Results" chapter (Chapter 4).

---

[260]Timothy A. Brown, *Confirmatory Factor Analysis for Applied Research* (New York: Guilford Press, 2006), 51.

[261]Gregory R. Hancock and Ralph O. Mueller, eds., *Structural Equation Modeling: A Second Course*, (Greenwich, Conn.: Information Age Publishing, 2006), 1-2.

[262]Kline, *Principles and Practice of Structural Equation Modeling*, 2d ed., 63-65.

Model Specification: A Model of Influences on Media and Outcomes on News Content

SEM is an a priori approach, which means that the hypotheses of the project must be specified beforehand based on previous research and/or theory. These predictions may be specified in the form of regression equations in which model parameters are defined and estimated to determine the relationship and fit among observed variables and latent factors based on the data provided. Hypotheses may also be represented pictorially by drawing the proposed model with its respective observed and unobserved variables and their predicted relationships using a SEM program with a graphic interface, such as AMOS.[263] The latter approach was used for the current study.

As mentioned previously in this chapter, hybrid structural equation models using CFA examine the relationships between constructs and variables to determine how well the manifest (observed) variables measure the latent (unobserved) constructs. This component is the *measurement* portion of the model. SEM also permits examination between these unobserved (latent) constructs and is considered the *structural* portion of the model. The unobserved constructs in the proposed model for the current study are extramedia influences, organizational influences, within-media influences, and influence/outcome on content and coverage decisions.

As shown in Figure 2.3, the paths (arrows) in the measurement portion of the model are directed from the latent constructs to the observed variables (i.e., from the ovals to the rectangles). This means that the measured variables are represented as reflective (effect) indicators as opposed to formative (causal) indicators. The indicators were depicted in this manner because they all represent ways of measuring the unobservable constructs. If the

---

[263]Ibid, 63-64.

94

arrows were pointing from the indicators to the constructs, it would mean that they would "cause" the construct. For example, this depiction would mean measures of advertising pressures (instances in which advertisers pressure media) would cause extramedia influences. This is not true because advertiser pressures are *a type of* extramedia influences. Since the abstract concepts of extramedia, organizational, within-media, and influence/outcome on content are not directly measurable, the effect indicators are necessary because they are observable ways of measuring these constructs. Furthermore, the latent constructs in the proposed model are not composites or indexes of the indicators. The indicators instead represent a selection of ways to measure these unobserved constructs. Thus, the representation in the model (arrows going out) is appropriate.[264]

Model Identification: Assessing Identification of the Influences on Media Content (IOMC) Model

After the model was specified, identification was assessed to determine if it is theoretically testable. According to Kline, if the model is identified, "it is theoretically possible for the computer to derive a unique estimate of every model parameter."[265] For a model to be identified, there must be a sufficient amount of variance and covariance information available from the observed variables to estimate the unknown information. As mentioned, structural equation models may be depicted pictorially or specified through a series of algebraic equations. To solve these equations, there must be enough known information to determine the value of the unknowns.

---

[264]For a deeper explanation, see Rex B. Kline, "Reverse Arrow Dynamics: Formative Measurement and Feedback Loops," in *Structural Equation Modeling: A Second Course, Hancock and Mueller,* eds. (Greenwich, Conn.: Information Age Publishing, 2006), 43-68.

[265]Kline, *Principles and Practice of Structural Equation Modeling*, 2d ed., 64.

A model must be identified in order to go forth with the estimation procedure in the fourth stage of the process. Although algebraic identification can be extremely difficult, especially with complex models, a few precautions may be taken to help with the process. Four of the most commonly used steps are outlined below. They are: setting the metric for the latent variables, the "t-rule," local identification, and the recursive "rule."

Setting the Metric. One way to help ensure model identification is to set a scale for every latent construct. This can be accomplished in two ways. First, one loading (regression coefficient) can be set to 1.0. That is, one of the paths (arrows) from the latent construct to the observed variable is fixed to 1.0, which means that the metric of the unobserved variable (oval) will be the same as that particular observed variable. For example, if the scale was set to a path leading to age, the metric of the latent variable would be communicated in years. Another option is to set the latent construct's variance to 1.0, which establishes a standardized metric. The former approach is most often used and was the method applied in the current study. Typically, for non-Likert-type items, the path of the indicator with the strongest reliability is set 1.0. Although this study used Likert-type scales, this criterion was used for uniformity.

The "t-rule." This stipulation indicates that the number of parameters to be estimated (the unknowns) must be less than or equal to the number of sample variances and covariances (the knowns). This is a necessary condition for model identification. The hypothesized IOMC model for this study had 13 observed measures (known sample variances and covariances), which translate into 91 sample moments, and 28 parameters to estimate (unknowns). Because the number of knowns (91) exceeds the number of unknowns

(28), resulting in 63 degrees of freedom, the model was overidentified. Thus, there was sufficient information available for identification purposes.

Local Identification. The local identification "rule" simply suggests that if there are three or more indicators per latent variable, identification may be met. This is also known as the three-indicator rule, and the initial hypothesized model met this condition. It is important to point out, however, that a model may still be identified even if there are fewer than three indicators per latent variable.[266] Nevertheless, Kline has contended that researchers, when working with smaller samples, are more likely to run into estimation problems on models with only two indicators per latent construct.[267]

Recursive "rule." It has also been noted that if the model is recursive (i.e., it does not contain feedback loops between the constructs or correlated error or disturbance terms), it is identified.[268] Since the current model met this criterion, it was considered recursive.

In summary, the main point to remember about model identification is that every unknown parameter must have a unique solution in order to be identified. The only fool-proof method for determining identification is to depict it algebraically, a process that is often difficult or even impossible for fairly complex models such as the one posited in the current study.

---

[266]For example, see Kenneth A. Bollen, *Structural Equations with Latent Variables* (New York: John Wiley, 1989). Bollen talks of the "two-indicator rule," which is one of the sufficient conditions for identification in CFA models.

[267]Kline, *Principles and Practice of Structural Equation Modeling*, 2d ed., 172.

[268]For example, see Bollen, *Structural Equations with Latent Variables*.

Missing Values and Data Screening

Before moving to the data-screening phase and estimation of the hypothesized model, it was necessary to assess the data file for missing values and possible nonresponse patterns. A total of 696 reporters officially started the survey;[269] however, only cases that had complete values for 9 of the 13 measured variables in the study were retained. This restriction led to the deletion of 78 cases missing values (responses) on more than 30% (five or more) of the variables under study, resulting in 618 usable cases.

A general rule of thumb for SEM and CFA is to have approximately 10 cases per parameters to estimate.[270] The hypothesized model had 28 parameters to estimate, so a sample size of 280 was needed. This study, however, used a model-development approach in which the data file was split into two subfiles (one for estimating the hypothesized model and making modifications and the other for confirming the modified model/changes). Therefore, a larger sample size of 560 was required (280 x 2 = 560). Since there were a total of 618 usable cases, the sample size was large enough to proceed without caution.

After close inspection of the file, the data were considered missing at random (MAR), as no particular data-loss patterns were detected.[271] Since the Maximum Likelihood (ML) estimation technique used in the study assumes that none of the data are missing, which is unlikely for survey research, missing values were imputed using the Expectation-Maximization (EM) algorithm in EQS 6.1. The expectation-maximization approach was

---

[269]This number does not include those reporters who officially started the survey but dropped out before answering the first five questions. It does, however, include those people who dropped out later in the survey.

[270]For example, see Rex B. Kline, *Principles and Practice of Structural Equation Modeling* (New York: Guilford Press, 1998); Dennis L. Jackson, "Revisiting Sample Size and Number of Parameter Estimates: Some Support for the N:q Hypothesis," *Structural Equation Modeling* 10, no. 1 (2003): 128-141.

[271]Some of the cases missing data were simply due to respondents dropping out of the survey.

chosen because results from Gold and Bentler's 2000 study comparing four different methods for handling incomplete data favored EM methods, despite the proportion of missing data, the data's distributional characteristics, or sample size.[272]

After imputing missing values, the data were screened to ensure that assumptions associated with SEM were met. Specifically, the data were first screened by examining descriptive statistics, checking for linearity, identifying outliers and/or extreme cases, and assessing the assumption of multivariate normality. The means and standard deviation values appeared reasonable, and the minimum and maximum values were within appropriate range. The bivariate scatterplots showed sufficiently linear relationships between the variables. Univariate boxplots showed several outliers and extreme values for the *Staff Size Pressure* measure and one outlier for the *Agenda Building* measure. After an inspection of the data file, however, none of the cases appeared suspect. Still, they were kept in mind for possible omission. A closer inspection of potential outliers revealed five cases with large Mahalanobis distance values. These cases had previously appeared as potential problem cases in the boxplots. In addition to exceeding the critical Mahalanobis value, the cases also showed jumps in values from the next case. This finding solidified the suspicion that the cases were outliers. Therefore, they were removed from the data file.

To further check for normality issues, Mardia's coefficient for multivariate kurtosis was examined in AMOS 7.0. Mardia's coefficient was slightly inflated at 7.427, and an inspection of the Mahalanobis values revealed that one additional case showed a jump in

---

[272]Michael Steven Gold and Peter M. Bentler, "Treatments of Missing Data: A Monte Carlo Comparison of RBHI, Iterative Stochastic Regression Imputation, and Expectation-Maximization," *Structural Equation Modeling* 7, no. 3 (2000): 319-355.

value.[273] The case was removed from and the data file was rerun to check for normality. Mardia's coefficient dropped to 6.077, and no jumps in Mahalanobis values were detected after the suspect case was removed. Thus, the data file was deemed acceptable to proceed with the analyses. In all, six cases were removed, which resulted in a final data file of 612 cases (618 - 6 = 612). The descriptives for the 13 measured variables are shown in Table 3.2.

---

[273]Mardi's coefficient can be interpreted as a z-score, which means that the current data set is approximately 7 standard deviations from the mean (as opposed to the traditional cutoff of 3 for outliers and extreme values). Larger data sets, however, can actually inflate the magnitude of this value. Taking the size of the current data file into consideration, the value of Mardia's coefficient presents no reason to suspect major departures from normality. For more information regarding multivariate normality, Mardia's coefficient, and their relationship to sample size, see Barbara Manning Miller, "Issue Advocacy to Community Stakeholders: A Structural Equation Model of Potential Outcomes," (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2006), 60; and Claudio Aqueveque and Davide Ravasi, "Corporate Reputation, Affect, and Trustworthiness: An Explanation for the Reputation-Performance Relationship," Paper presented to the Linking Perceptions and Reality Session at the Reputation Institute's 10th International Conference on Corporate Reputation, Image, Identity, and Competitiveness, New York, NY, May 2006, 15.

Table 3.2. *Descriptives of Final Full Data File*

Variable	Mean[a]	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum[b]
Advertiser Pressure	14.01	5.77	4.00	28.00
Public Relations Pressure	14.86	4.25	3.00	21.00
Political Pressure	22.70	6.64	5.00	35.00
Owner/Executive Pressure	8.86	4.56	3.00	21.00
Economic Pressure	19.76	6.21	5.00	35.00
Level of Ownership Concentration	6.31	2.08	2.00	8.00
Staff Size Pressure Measure	12.42	1.84	2.00	14.00
Direct Management Pressure	12.01	4.53	3.00	21.00
Indirect Management Pressure	11.80	5.04	3.00	21.00
Agenda Building Outcome Measure	30.01	9.43	9.00	59.00
Frame Building Outcome Measure	27.06	8.38	8.00	50.00
Agenda Cutting Outcome Measure	28.68	10.19	10.00	56.00
Market Size	123.86	53.59	1	201

[a] All descriptives represent the actual values after data imputation and the removal of outliers and potential problem cases.
[b] The minimum and maximum values do not represent the *actual* range values. Instead, they represent the *possible* values.

Assumptions for Maximum Likelihood (ML) estimation, the method used in the SEM

analysis and the default estimation method in AMOS, were also assessed. They are

independence of observations, proper model specification, multivariate normality of the

endogenous variables, and independence of the exogenous variables and disturbances.[274]

The independence assumptions were met because of the sampling process, and the options

selected in the Web-based survey system only permitted respondents to take the survey once.

After participants completed the survey, their link came up as invalid if they attempted to

regain access. Since Mardia's coefficient was slightly inflated at 6.077, it appeared that the

data could possibly be considered non-normal. Although the value was not particularly high

given the larger sample size, it was decided to err on the side of caution by validating the

results of the final model by using Bollen-Stine bootstrapping in AMOS 7.0. The

bootstrapped output verified the initial ML estimation results (See Appendix 10); therefore,

output from the ML estimates is reported under the "Final Model Assessment" section in

Chapter 4.

Model Assessment: Validation and Evaluation of the Measurement and Structural Models

For the first stage of the study, SEM was used to estimate and evaluate the

hypothesized IOMC model. SEM basically compares the sample data's observed

variance/covariance matrix with the variance/covariance matrix implied by the proposed

model. As suggested by Kline[275] and Anderson and Gerbing,[276] the current study followed

the two-step modeling approach for examining structural regression models, the type of

---

[274]Kline, *Principles and Practice of Structural Equation Modeling,* 2d ed., 115.

[275]Ibid, 215-218.

[276]James C. Anderson and David W. Gerbing, "Structural Equation Modeling in Practice: A Review and Recommended Two-Step Approach," *Psychological Bulletin* 103, no. 3 (May 1988): 411-423.

model proposed in this project. This process involves first validating the measurement

portion of the model.[277] First, the proposed model is respecified as a CFA model with all

possible associations represented among the latent constructs. These relationships are

depicted as covariances.   Next, this larger-scale CFA is assessed to determine whether it fits

the sample data. This is done by (a) examining the factor loadings to ensure that all paths

(from the latent constructs to the measured indicators) are significant, (b) reviewing the

covariance coefficients, and (c) assessing model fit using the same type of goodness-of-fit

indices and measures that are used to evaluate the proposed model. If the measurement

model is found to be a poor fit to the data, it should be respecified using the same procedures

implemented when modifying a full model (i.e., modification indices, theory, and previous

research). According to Kline, "If the fit of this CFA model is poor, then not only may the

researcher's hypotheses about the measurement be wrong, but also the fit of the original SR

model to the data may be even worse if its structural model is overidentified."[278] Thus,

recognizing discrepancies in the full structural model is easier if the researcher first identifies

problems in the measurement portion of the model. Once an acceptable measurement model

has been found, the full model is evaluated.[279] Since the first part of this process is

exploratory in nature, it was used only on the first subfile of 306, as described in the

paragraphs that follow.

　　　As mentioned earlier, the current study also took a model-development approach.

The technique combines exploratory and confirmatory approaches by randomly splitting a

---

[277]Recall that the measurement model consists of the latent constructs and their respective indicators, basically CFAs, while the structural portion is made up of the paths among the latent constructs.

[278]Kline, *Principles and Practice of Structural Equation Modeling,* 2d ed., 216.

large data file in half, using one half for testing and modifying the proposed model and the other half for confirmation of changes. For example, if the proposed model is found to fit poorly to the data, an alternative model can be proposed and tested based on the modification indices, theory, and previous research.

The data file of 612 cases was separated into two subfiles using a random number generator in SPSS 15.0. All SEM analyses were conducted in AMOS 7.0. The first subfile of 306 cases was used for validating the measurement model and for the initial testing and modifications of the IOMC model. Although Shoemaker and Reese's "onion" diagram has been an essential tool for scholars as it allowed for an easier classification system of where influences on content from, it is not a comprehensive model that can actually test the pressures and potential effects on the media and news content. Since a systematic model of content influences and outcomes has neither been proposed nor tested prior to this project, the first subfile of this study was used for exploratory analyses, including model trimming and building based on modification indices obtained in the AMOS output. The output suggestions, which are purely data-driven, were only implemented, however, when they were consistent with theory and previous research. The second subfile was used to test the respecified model that materialized from the exploratory analyses with the first data file. Therefore, the latter was a confirmatory analysis. Finally, the full data file of 612 cases was used to further substantiate the results of the two subfiles.

Several indices were used to assess model fit. The strength, direction, and significance of standardized and unstandardized coefficients were also examined. First, the model chi-squared statistic was obtained. The null hypothesis in SEM proposes that both the

observed and implied covariance matrices are from the same population.[280] Therefore,

according to Kline, the chi-squared statistic in this case "is actually a "badness-of-fit" index

because the higher its value, the worse the model's correspondence to the data."[281]

Therefore, the failure to reject the null hypothesis supports the researcher's proposed model.

As Kline has noted, "the logic is backward from the usual reject-support context for

statistical tests" because here you want a nonsignificant value.[282] Although there are some

problems with the chi-squared statistic, such as its high sensitivity to sample size which often

leads to the rejection of well-fitting models, it is still widely reported in SEM research.[283]

Other fit indices suggested by Hu and Bentler[284] and others[285] were also used to

assess the proposed model. The absolute fit indices that were implemented in the current

study are the SRMR (standardized root mean squared residuals) and the RMSEA (root means

square error of approximation) with p-close value; the relative fit indices are the TLI (Tucker

Lewis index) and the CFI (comparative fit index).

There is no clear consensus on the cutoff points for most model fit indices. Some

researchers adhere to the traditional rules of thumb for reasonable model fit, which include a

nonsignificant χ^2 (which seldom occurs with larger sample sizes), SRMR < .10, and CFI and

---

[280]Miller, "Issue Advocacy to Community Stakeholders," 61.

[281]Kline, *Principles and Practice of Structural Equation Modeling,* 2d ed., 135.

[282]Ibid, 136.

[283]For a deeper discussion of the chi-squared statistic, see Kline, *Principles and Practice of Structural Equation Modeling*, 2d ed., 136.

[284]Li-tze Hu and Peter M. Bentler, "Cutoff Criteria for Fit Indexes in Covariance Structure Analysis: Conventional Criteria Versus New Alternatives," *Structural Equation Modeling* 6, no. 1 (1999): 1-55.

[285]For example, see Kline, *Principles and Practice of Structural Equation Modeling*, 2d ed., 134; Roderick P. McDonald and Moon-Ho Ringo Ho, "Principles and Practice in Reporting Structural Equation Analyses," *Psychological Methods* 7, no. 1 (March 2002): 72-73; Anne Boomsma, "Reporting Analyses of Covariance Structures," *Structural Equation Modeling* 7, no. 3 (2000): 472-473.

TLI ≥ .90.[286] Furthermore, researchers have noted that RMSEA values of ≤ .05 suggest close

fit, while values of .05 to .08 indicate reasonable error of approximation; RMSEA values ≥

.10 signify poor model fit.[287] P-close values associated with the RMSEA should be

nonsignificant (>.05).[288] Kline has also suggested reporting the 90% confidence intervals for

the RMSEA with the lower bound ≤.05 and the upper bound ≤ .10.[289] Hu and Bentler have

suggested more stringent cutoff values for the aforementioned fit indices: SRMR close to 08;

CFI and TLI close to .95; and RMSEA close to .06 with a p-close value of ≥ .05.[290] Although

these stricter values have oftentimes been adopted as the "golden rules" of cutoff criteria, a

fairly recent article has warned that Hu and Bentler's suggestions have been misinterpreted

and overgeneralized, as researchers and journal editors alike have disregarded the limitations

noted in their 1999 study.[291] As a result, both cutoff criteria were considered in the current

study.

---

[286]For example, see Kline, *Principles and Practice of Structural Equation Modeling*, 2d ed., 135-145; "Structural Equation Modeling," *Statistics Solutions, Inc.,* http://www.statisticssolutions.com/Structural-Equation-ModelingSEM.htm (accessed March 1, 2007).

[287]For example, see Michael W. Browne and Robert Cudeck, "Alternative Ways of Assessing Model Fit," in *Testing Structural Equation Models*, eds. Kenneth A. Bollen and J. Scott Long (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1993), 136-162; Kline, *Principles and Practice of Structural Equation Modeling*, 2d ed., 139.

[288]"Structural Equation Modeling," *Statistics Solutions, Inc.,* http://www.statisticssolutions.com/Structural-Equation-ModelingSEM.htm (accessed March 1, 2007).

[289]Kline, *Principles and Practice of Structural Equation Modeling*, 2d ed., 139.

[290]Hu and Bentler, "Cutoff Criteria for Fit Indexes in Covariance Structure Analysis: Conventional Criteria Versus New Alternatives," 27.

[291]Herbert W. Marsh, Kit-Tai Hau, and Zhonglin Wen, "In Search of Golden Rules: Comment on Hypothesis-Testing Approaches to Setting Cutoff Values for Fit Indexes and Dangers in Overgeneralizing Hu and Bentler's (1999) Findings," *Structural Equation Modeling* 11, no. 3 (2004): 320-341.

Construct and Parameter Assessments

Correlation and multiple regression analyses were used to address the hypotheses and research questions proposed in this study. This portion of the study was evaluated using SPSS 15.0. The first hypothesis examined the relationship between public relations pressures and staff size pressures. The second hypothesis correlated staff size pressures and influences/outcome on content decisions. Both were assessed using bivariate (zero-order) correlation analyses. Partial correlation coefficients were computed to evaluate the first research question, which examined the relationship strength of the first two hypotheses after controlling for market size. Hypotheses 3 through 6 examined the zero-order correlations between market size with overall influence/outcome on content (H3); advertiser pressures (H4); political/governmental pressures (H5), and public relations pressures (H6).

Multiple regression analyses were used to address research questions 2 through 5 and hypotheses 7 through 10. Research question 2 evaluated how well each measure of extramedia influences predicts the overall content influences/outcomes. Hypothesis 7 proposed that the advertising pressures measure was the strongest predictor. The third research question evaluated how well each organizational influence measure predicts the overall content influences/outcomes. Hypothesis 8 posited that the owner/executive pressures measure was the strongest predictor. To evaluate the "content influence/outcome" variable in multiple regression, it was first necessary to convert it from a latent, unobserved construct to an observed variable. To do so, the factor score coefficients from running a CFA in AMOS were first obtained. The product of each estimate and the value of its respective observed indicator were then summed to compute a new observed variable in SPSS.[292]

---

[292]For example, (coefficient 1 x agenda building) + (coefficient 2 x frame building) + (coefficient 3 x agenda cutting) = Observed Variable for Content Influence/Outcome.

Research question 4 assessed how well each measure of extramedia influences predicted reporters' perceptions of instances of agenda cutting. Hypothesis 9 predicted that advertiser pressure was the strongest predictor. Finally, the fifth research question evaluated how well each organizational influence measure predicted instances of agenda cutting. Hypothesis 10 posited that pressures from owners and top-level executives best predicted reporters' perceptions of agenda-cutting occurrences in the news decision process.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The main goal of this study was to examine television reporters' perceptions of how internal and external forces attempt to influence news content and coverage decisions, to what effect they are successful at doing so, and to what effect on content. To offer a more comprehensive picture of this process, this study was segmented into two distinct phases.

The first stage of this research evaluated a proposed model of media influences and outcomes using SEM to assess the forces from a higher-level perspective by examining the overall process (See Figure 2.3). Since this study took a model-development approach, the data file of 612 cases was randomly divided into two subfiles. The first subfile was used for (a) validating the measurement model, (b) exploring the model, and (c) model trimming and model building. Thus, the first subfile (n=306) was used for exploratory purposes. The second subfile (n=306) was used to validate the adjustments that manifested from exploration of the first file. Finally, the full data file was used to substantiate the modifications and model fit results of the two subfiles. Therefore, the second subfile and the full data file were used for confirmatory analyses.

The second stage of the study consisted of evaluating specific relationships that were not directly ascertainable through the model evaluation in stage one. The hypotheses and research questions investigating these relationships were examined through correlation and multiple regression analyses using the full data file (n=612). Additional data screening measures were also employed prior to the second-stage analyses to comply with the more stringent assumptions

associated with multiple regression.[293] The results from each stage are discussed in the sections that follow.

Stage One: Model Assessment

Validating and Exploring the Measurement Model

The measurement model was assessed using data from subfile 1 (n=306), the exploratory file. The initial analysis indicated that the four-factor CFA model was a fairly poor fit to the exploratory data file based on the values of many of the selected indices [χ^2 (48) = 230.830, p < .001; CFI = .91; TLI = .87; SRMR = .0794; RMSEA = .11, p-close < .001, with the 90% confidence interval .098 to .126].

The standardized solution (shown in Figure 4.1) identified a few problems.[294] First, the loading of the *Level of Concentration Index* onto the Organizational Influences factor was low (.08) and nonsignificant (p = .224). Since this particular index was not tested or suggested in previous research and the correlation residuals of this indicator with those of other factors were not substantial, it was decided to omit the measure from the model. Second, it was found that, although significant (p < .01), the *Staff Size Pressure Measure* loading onto the Within-Media Influences factor was fairly low (.19). Although it seemed facially valid to associate this indicator with influences within the media organization, previous research has considered measures associated with staff size as organizational-level

---

[293]The assumptions for multiple regression include multivariate normal distribution, linearity, and normally distributed residuals, among others.

[294]The Market Size variable is not depicted in the measurement model because it is an observed variable that stands alone. That is, it does not measure an unobserved variable; thus, it is not a part of a CFA, which is the measurement portion of the model.

constraints.[295] Therefore, instead of associating the *Staff Size Pressure Measure* with Within-

Media Influences, as originally proposed, it was posited that it would be more strongly

associated with Organizational Influences, as indicated in previous research.

---

[295]For example, see Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message* 2d ed., 139-173; Frederick Fico and William Cote, "Partisan and Structural Balance of Election Stories on the 1998 Governor's Race in Michigan," *Mass Communication & Society* 5, no. 2 (spring 2002): 165-182.
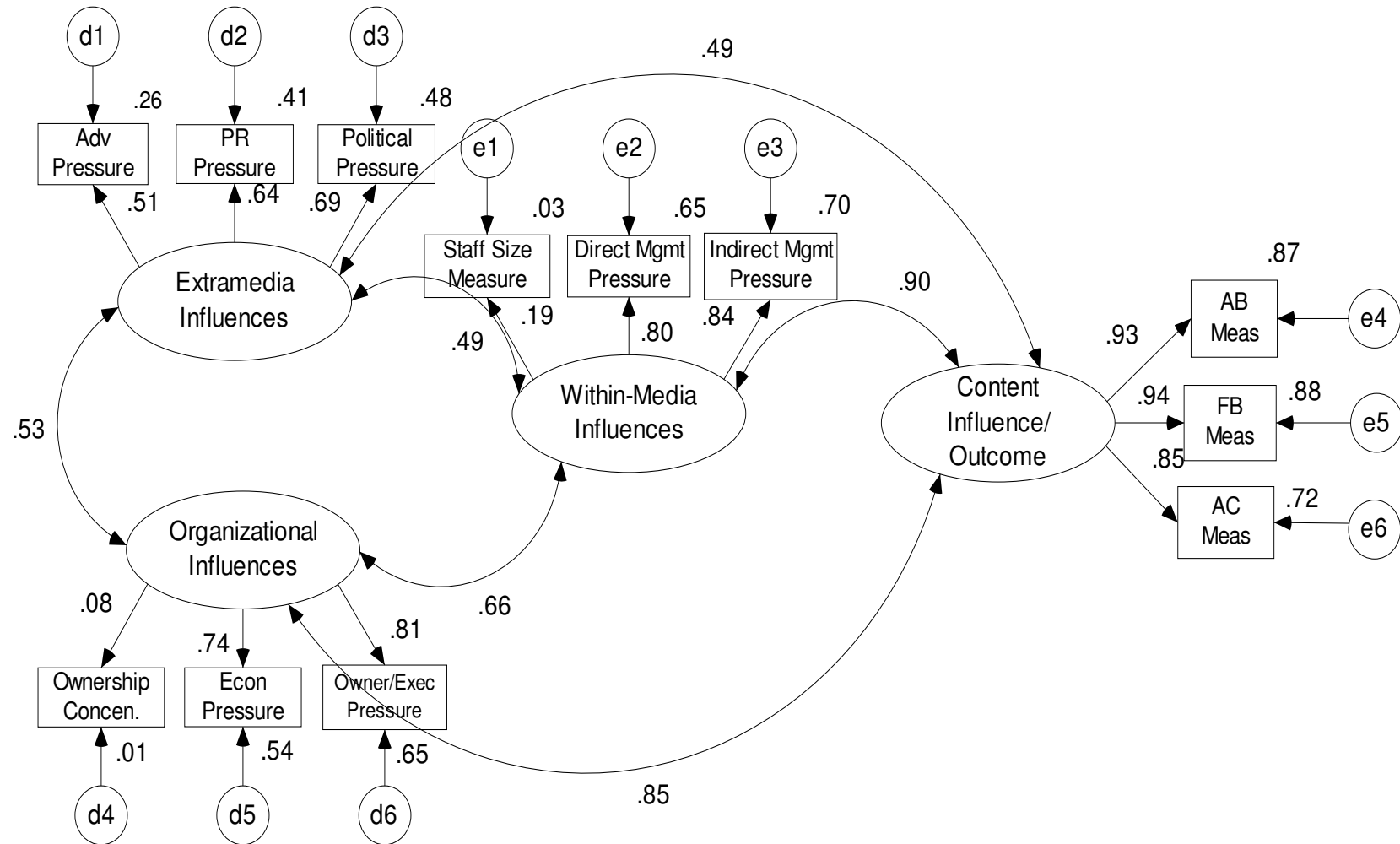
Figure 4.1. *Initial Measurement Model with Standardized Coefficients*

In addition to the issues that surfaced with the aforementioned indicators, the modification indices (MIs) also suggested some notable changes in the measurement model to improve fit. Again, only those changes that were facially valid and made sense based on theory and previous research were implemented. Three suggested changes were particularly noteworthy, and each involved the correlation of error terms. The recommended changes were correlated errors between (1) the *Staff Size Pressure Measure* and *Economic Pressure*; (2) *Political Pressure* and *PR Pressure*; (3) and the *Level of Agenda Building* and the *Level of Agenda Cutting* measures. First, the correlation between the *Staff Size Pressure Measure* and *Economic Pressure* errors was likely due to a measurement artifact, as both were measured on a Strongly Disagree/Strongly Agree scale; all other indicators were measured on an Almost Never/Very Often scale.

Second, the correlated error terms of the *Political* and *PR Pressure* measures, both of which are indicators of Extramedia Influences, are logical because both are forms of information subsidies. That is, both sources provide free information (e.g., press releases, BNRs, VNRs, and press conferences) to the media. The third indicator of the factor, however, *Advertiser Pressures*, does not. Instead, pressures from advertisers are financially related. Thus, the relationship between pressures from political/governmental officials and public relations practitioners is evident, as both provide information to the media free of charge without financial incentives/payments, as with advertisers.

Finally, the MIs also suggested that the measurement errors between the *Agenda Building* and *Agenda Cutting* measures were strongly related. This recommendation is facially valid and is likely the result of opposite question wording in the survey. For example, the first indicator, *Agenda Building*, was measured by asking questions about

covering or emphasizing particular stories/topics; that is, putting an item *on* the news agenda. The *Agenda-Cutting* measure, however, assessed just the opposite by asking questions about keeping stories/topics out of the news or *off* the news agenda. Therefore, a negative correlation between the items makes sense because both used the same type of questions but assessed opposing outcomes (i.e., cover vs. not cover).

Based upon the results and the suggested modifications from the initial run, the measurement model was re-specified so that (1) the *Level of Concentration* measure was omitted; (2) the *Staff Size Pressure Measure* indicator was moved from the Within-Media Influences factor to the Organizational Influences factor; and the error terms between (3) the *Staff Size Pressure Measure* and *Economic Pressure,* (4) *Political and PR Pressure*, and (5) the *Level of Agenda Building* and the *Level of Agenda Cutting* measurement errors were correlated.

The re-specified measurement model in Figure 4.2 showed major improvements over the initial model [χ^2 (35) = 107.199, p < .001; CFI = .96; TLI = .94; SRMR = .0539; RMSEA = .08, p-close = .002, with the 90% confidence interval .065 to .100]. In addition to the progress in model fit, the *Staff Size Pressure Measure* loaded slightly higher on the Organizational Influences factor (.22) than it did on the Within-Media Influences factor (.19), and it remained significant (p < .001). All other loadings and covariances within the measurement model were also significant.   Because changes were made with regard to the exclusion and placement of the observed measures in the measurement portion of the model (i.e., the *Level of Concentration* index was omitted and the *Staff Size Pressure Measure* was moved), the reliability coefficients for the measured variables and their respective constructs

were reassessed and are reported in Table 4.1.[296] Given the adequate fit of the measurement

model, it was appropriate to proceed to the second stage of the two-step modeling process—

evaluation of the full structural model.

---

[296]A summary table of the alpha was necessary since one of the indicators, the *Staff Size Pressure Measure*, changed location as a result of the modifications in the measurement model. Although the reliability coefficients for the measured indicators did not change, the reliabilities for the latent constructs represent the final changes for this measurement portion and inform the reader of the strength of the overall measures of the constructs.
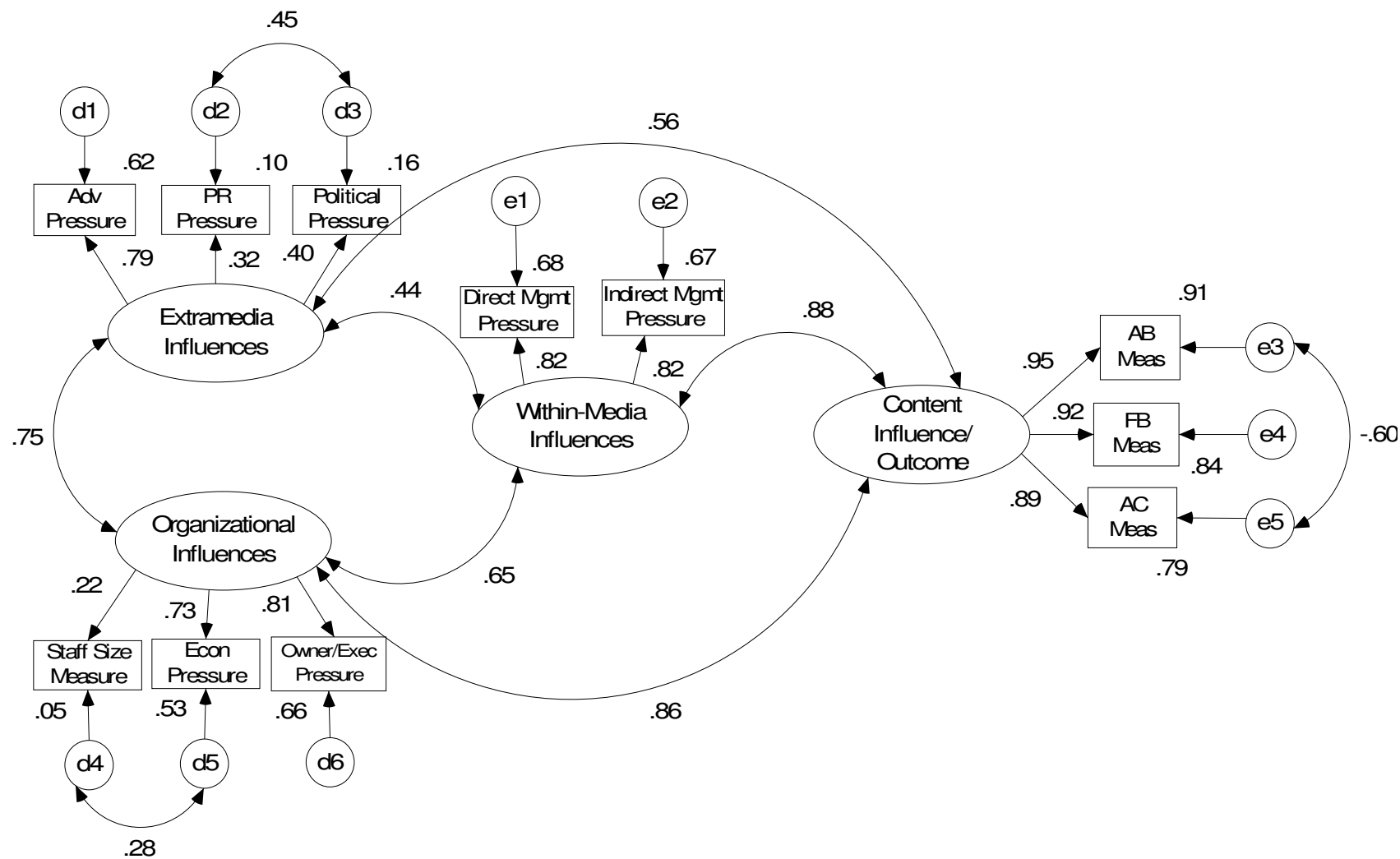
Figure 4.2. *Modified Measurement Model with Standardized Coefficients*

Table 4.1. *Cronbach's Alpha Reliabilities of Modified Model Scales*

Variable/Construct	Scale Reliability (Cronbach's α)
Extramedia Influences	**.86**
Advertising Pressure	.87
Public Relations Pressure	.81
Political/Governmental Pressure	.82
Organizational Influences	**.84**
Staff Size Pressure Measure	.68
Economic Pressure	.78
Owner/Executive Pressure	.94
Within-Media Org. Influence	**.85**
Direct Management Pressure	.72
Indirect Management Pressure	.83
Market Size (reverse-coded DMA rank)	Info. obtained from sampling (no scale)
Content Influence/Outcome	**.93**
Level Agenda Building	.80
Level Frame Building	.80
Level Agenda Cutting	.84
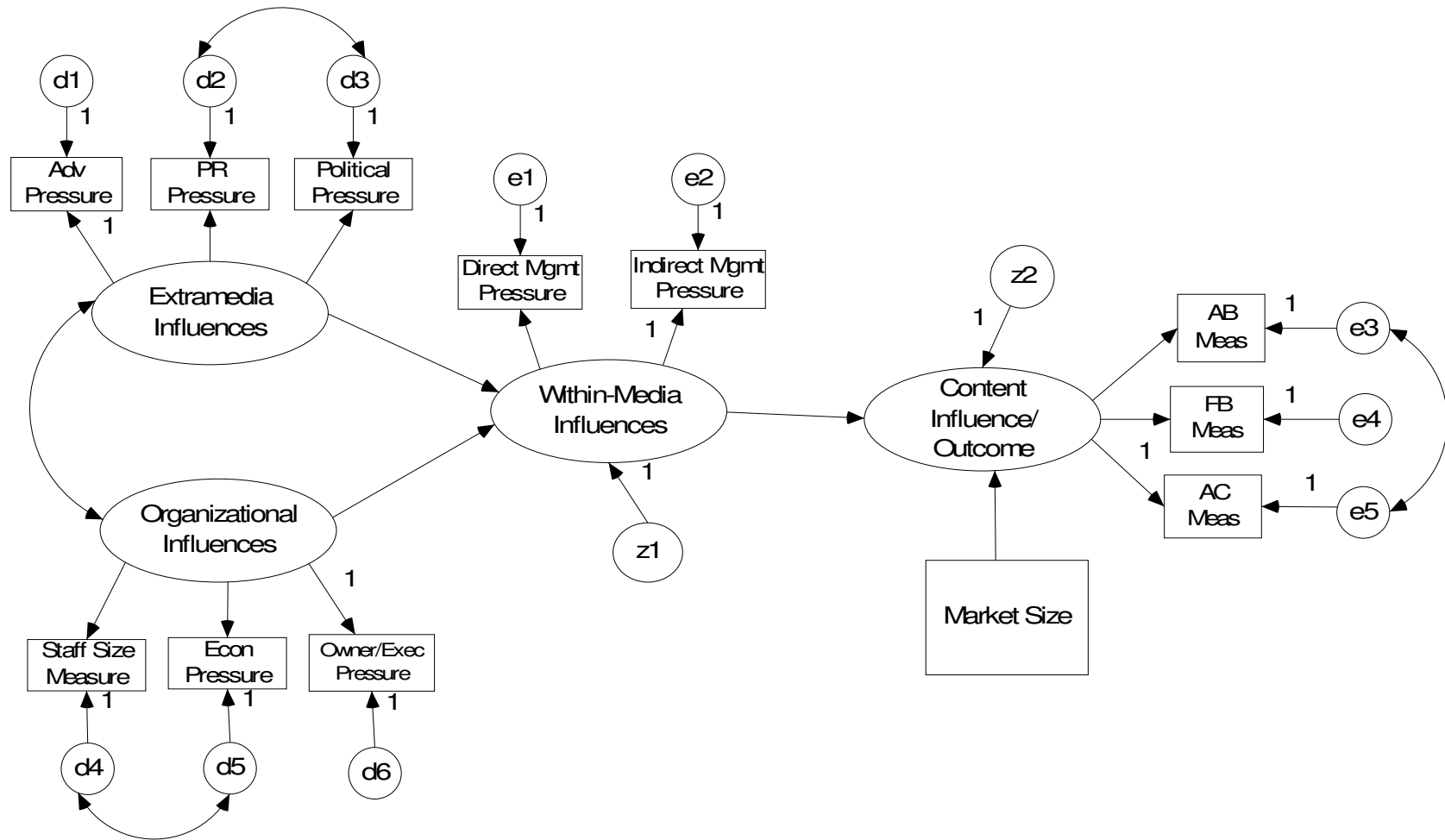
Figure 4.3. *Modified Hypothesized Model with Changes Implemented from the Measurement Model*

Initial Model Testing: Evaluating the Modified Hypothesized Model

The hypothesized model was modified by implementing the suggested changes that surfaced in the measurement portion of the two-step modeling approach. This modified hypothesized model is shown in Figure 4.3.[297] As with the measurement model, the revised hypothesized model was examined using the first subfile (n = 306), the exploratory data. Results indicated that the model's fit to the data was fair, but there was some room for improvement [χ^2 (48) = 180.436, p < .001; CFI = .93; TLI = .90; SRMR = .0635; RMSEA = .096, p-close < .001, with the 90% confidence interval .082 to .112].

Exploration and Modification

Upon examination of the overall model's output, it was clear that a few areas could be modified to improve model fit and explanation of the main dependent variable, content influence/outcome. Two observations, in particular, stood out from the others in the output: the relationship between Extramedia Influences and Within-Media Influences and the location of Market Size within the model. All paths within the structural portion of the model were significant except for those between (1) Extramedia Influences and Within-Media Influences and (2) Market Size and Content Influence/Outcome. First, forces from outside the media (e.g., advertisers, public relations professionals, and political/governmental officials) do not appear to have a significant amount of *direct* influence over newsroom managers within media organizations, at least within the scope of the current study. Instead, it appears that Extramedia Influences does *eventually* affect influences within the media, but

---

[297]Notice that the Market Size variable is now included for evaluating the model. Again, it was not included in the first stage of the two-step modeling process, evaluation of the measurement model, because that stage is reserved for examining the measurement portion of the model; that is, the CFAs (unobserved constructs with their respective indicators).

this relationship is first mediated by influences at the Organizational level. As noted throughout the study, all references to influences at each level are based on reporters' perceptions.

The second notable observation that emerged from the analysis involved the effect of Market Size on perceptions of influences on media content. As just mentioned, the path from Market Size to Content Influence/Outcome was nonsignificant, suggesting that the size of the market apparently does not have a *direct* effect on reporters' perceptions of influences on media content—at least with this particular population. One option was to remove the Market Size variable from the model altogether; however, it did not seem likely that the size of the market would not have some sort of effect on reporters' perceptions of content influences. Instead of removing the variable from the model, an alternative hypothesis was posed suggesting that Market Size would first have a direct effect on sources of influence outside the media (Extramedia Influences). That is, instead of Market Size having a *direct* influence on the dependent variable, the new hypothesis posited that it would directly affect reports of Extramedia Influences, thus having an *indirect* effect on Content Influence/Outcome. Specifically, it was expected that reporters working in larger markets would report overall fewer instances of attempted influences from extramedia sources. That is, a negative relationship between Market Size and Extramedia Influences was proposed.[298]

Two additional changes seemed logical as a result of the observations just mentioned, along with those made in the measurement-model portion of the two-step modeling approach. The first change involved the relationship between Extramedia and Organizational

---

[298]Recall that Market Size is measured by Designated Market Areas (DMAs). With DMAs, the smaller the number the larger the media market (e.g., the 1-25 markets are the largest). For the current study, however, DMAs were reverse-coded so the larger numbers would correspond with the larger media markets, and vice versa. This approach was taken to avoid confusion for both the researcher and the reader.

Influences. In the hypothesized model (See Figure 4.3), it was proposed that the influences at the extramedia and organizational levels (both independent variables before changes) would covary. In other words, no direct effects between the two variables were proposed. After moving the Market Size variable, however, this relationship was reconsidered— especially given that Extramedia Influences was no longer an exogenous variable. Thus, given the posited direct relationship between Market Size and Extramedia Influences, it made more sense to expect that those sources of Extramedia Influences would also have a direct effect on Organizational Influences. Rather than simply predicting that the variables changed together (covaried), a stronger hypothesis predicting a direct relationship was proposed.

A second change was posited partially as a result of modifications made in the measurement portion of the model: the relationship between Organizational Influences and Content Influence/Outcome. Originally, influences at the organizational level were only proposed to affect reporters' perceptions of influences on content indirectly; that is, after "filtering through" influences within the media organization (Within-Media Influences). This notion, however, was reconsidered, especially given that the *Staff Size Pressure* measure was more closely associated with the Organizational Influences factor. After reconsideration of influences at the organizational level, it seemed logical that each of the measures (economic pressures, pressures from owners and top-level executives, and staff size pressures) could also *directly* affect reporters' perceptions of content influences. Specifically, it was proposed that organizational influences could not only *indirectly* affect content by first influencing newsroom managers within the media organization, but they could also affect reporters' perceptions of influences on content *directly*. Although it was not specifically suggested in

the analysis output, the modification makes sound theoretical sense.[299] For example,

reporters may feel that station workers could easily avoid covering a particular story because

of an inadequate staff size (staff size pressure), or because it may offend a company with

economic clout over their station (economic pressure) or the general manager

(owner/executive pressure). In other words, they do not necessarily have to wait for their

news directors to tell them to do so. Instead, they may feel the pressure themselves and act

accordingly.

Based on empirical modifications suggested from the analysis output and on

theoretical and face validity justifications, the model was re-specified so that (1) the path

from Extramedia Influences to Within-Media Influences was omitted; (2) Market Size was

hypothesized to have a direct effect on Extramedia Influences, rather than Content

Influence/Outcome; (3) the covariance from Extramedia Influences to Organizational

Influences was changed to a direct path; and (4) Organizational Influences was hypothesized

to have a direct effect on Content Influence/Outcome (not just Within-Media Influences).[300]

The revised model showed improvement over the initial run of modified hypothesized

model and indicated a fairly reasonable fit to the data [χ^2 (47) = 133.082, p < .001; CFI = .96;

TLI = .94; SRMR = .0575; RMSEA = .077, p-close = .002, with the 90% confidence interval

.062 to .093]. Although the chi-squared test statistic was significant [χ^2 (47) = 133.082, p <

.001], other fit indices suggested reasonable model fit [CFI = .96; TLI = .94; SRMR =

---

[299]For example, Shoemaker and Reese have long indicated that the influence process is not a linear one. That is, influences do not have to move straight down the hierarchy (e.g., from ideological to extramedia to organizational to media routines to individual). Instead, gatekeepers at the different levels of the hierarchical model, the diagram on which the current model is partially based, have the ability to affect many different areas/levels simultaneously—not just those down the chain, so to speak.

[300]Each change was made one at a time and the output was assessed before making subsequent changes.

.0575]. Furthermore, the RMSEA value was within range of reasonable error of

approximation, based on the traditional rules of thumb [RMSEA = .077],[301] even though its

associated p-close statistic was significant (p-close =. 002).[302] Moreover, all standardized

regression weights were significant, and the revised model accounted for 92% of the variance

in the dependent variable, Content Influence/Outcome, thus providing additional support for

the strength and validity of the model. Given that the interrelationships depicted in the model

have not before been tested from the current, broader-range perspective, the model fit indices

coupled with the total variance explained provide further validation that the model and the

conceptualization of the variables and factors in this study represent a promising line of

scholarship. The revised model with the results from this exploratory stage is shown in

Figure 4.4.

---

[301]For example, see Kline, *Principles and Practice of Structural Equation Modeling* 2d ed., 139.

[302]The significance here, however, is due to the lower bound of the 90% confidence interval falling above .05; the appropriate range is ≤.05 for the lower bound and ≤ .10 for the upper bound. Values falling outside these ranges suggest poor approximate fit. Since only one range is out of bounds, it sends a mixed message (Kline, *Principles and Practice of Structural Equation Modeling* 2d ed., 139-140).

Figure 4.4. *Revised Model on Exploratory Subfile 1 with Standardized Coefficients (n = 306)*

Final Model Assessment

Since the model was deemed to be an acceptable fit with the data in the exploratory subfile, it was re-evaluated using data from the remaining subfile (n=306) that was withheld for the confirmatory portion of the analysis. Results indicated that the model was also a fairly reasonable representation of the withheld subfile, thus confirming the findings of the previous analysis [χ^2 (47) = 159.357, p < .001; CFI = .94; TLI = .92; SRMR = .0679; RMSEA = .089, p-close < .001, with the 90% confidence interval .074 to .104].

To provide additional validation, the model was retested using the full sample of 612 cases. The results from this analysis further confirmed that the model was an acceptable representation of the data [χ^2 (47) = 243.457, p < .001; CFI = .95; TLI = .93; SRMR = .0572; RMSEA = .083, p-close < .001, with the 90% confidence interval .073 to .093], based on many of the traditional rules of thumb for model fit. All of the regression weights (paths in the model) for the full sample were significant, as shown in Table 4.2, and the model explained 90% of the variance in Content Influence/Outcome, the dependent variable. The final confirmatory model with the results from the full data file (n=612) is shown in Figure 4.5. Table 4.3 illustrates the direct and indirect effects among each of the latent constructs in the model, and Appendix 9 shows the correlation matrix for the measured variables.
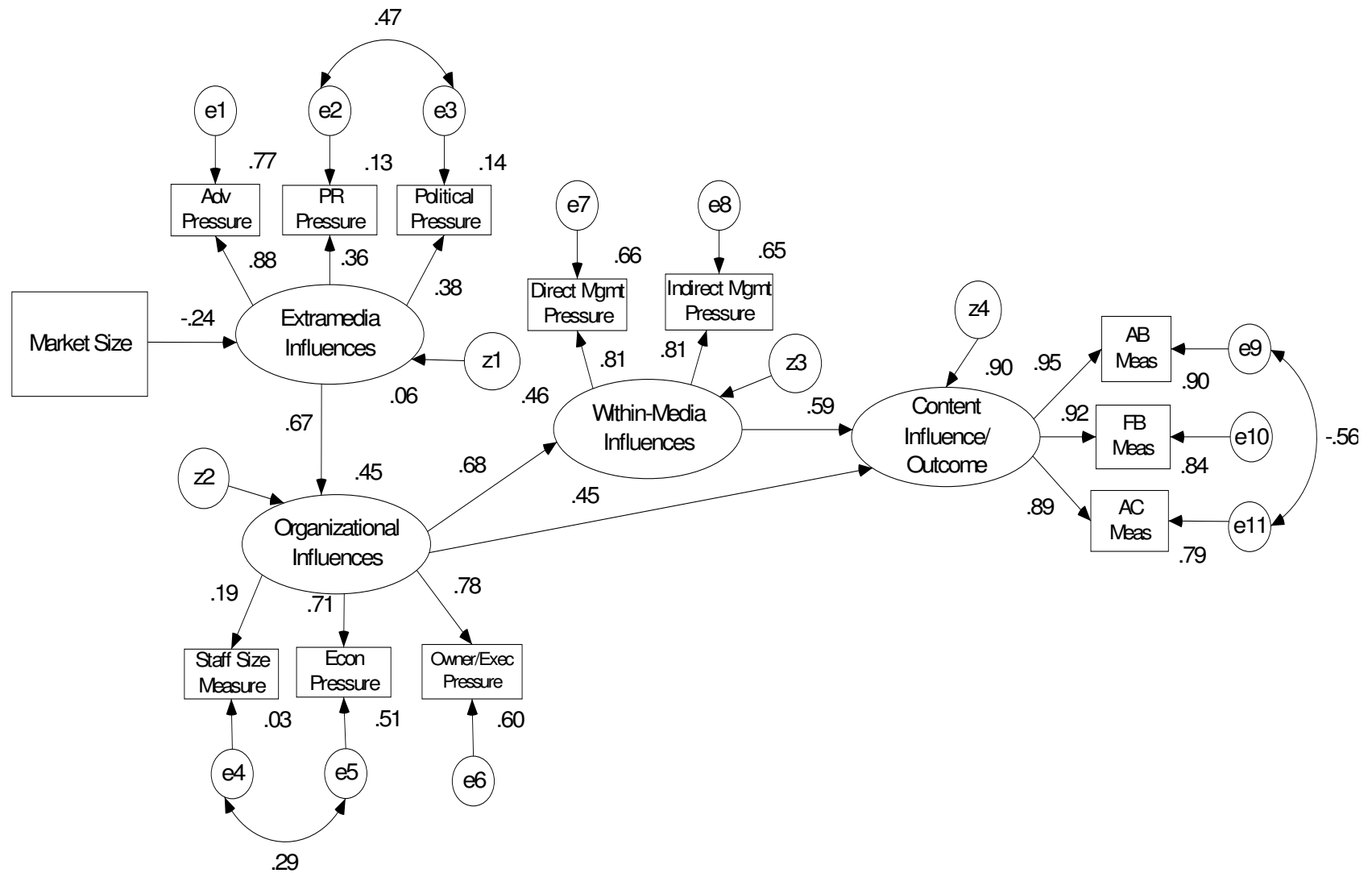
Figure 4.5. *Final Confirmatory Model on Full Sample with Standardized Coefficients (n = 612)*

Table 4.2. *Regression Weights for Validated Model on Full Data Set*

Path	Unstd. Estimate (S.E.)	Std. Estimate	p-value
Market Size → Extramedia Infl.	-.022 (.004)	-.236	***
Extramedia Infl. → Org. Infl.	.471 (.059)	.672	***
Org. Infl. → Within-Media Infl.	.782 (.062)	.679	***
Within-Media Infl. → Content Infl./Out.	1.301 (.104)	.587	***
Org. Infl. → Content Infl./Out.	1.140 (.118)	.447	***
Extramedia Infl. → Adv. Press. meas.	1.000	.876	
Extramedia Infl. → PR Press. meas.	.303 (.046)	.361	***
Extramedia Infl. → Political Press. meas.	.494 (.073)	.376	***
Content Infl./Out. → Agenda Cutting meas.	1.000	.887	
Content Infl./Out. → Frame Building meas.	.851 (.026)	.917	***
Content Infl./Out. → Agenda Building meas.	.992 (.032)	.951	***
Org. Infl. → Owner/Exec. Press. meas.	1.000	.776	
Org. Infl. → Economic Press. meas.	1.251 (.075)	.714	***
Org. Infl. → Staff Press. meas.	.097 (.023)	.186	***
Within-Media Infl. → Dir. Mgmt Press. meas.	.905 (.042)	.815	***
Within-Media Infl. → Ind. Mgmt Press. meas.	1.000	.809	
Covariance/Correlated Meas. Error			
e5 (Econ. Press.) ↔ e4 (Staff Size Press.)	2.248 (.369)	.287	***
e2 (PR Press.) ↔ e3 (Political Press.)	11.379 (1.175)	.467	***
e9 (Agenda Building) ↔ e11 (Agenda Cutting)	-7.615 (1.119)	-.556	***

Table 4.3. *Standardized Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects for Structural Paths*

Structural Path	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect
Market Size → Extramedia Influences	-.236	.000	-.236
Market Size → Organizational Influences	.000	-.159	-.159
Market Size → Within-Media Influences	.000	-.108	-.108
Market Size → Content Influence/Outcome	.000	-.134	-.134
Extramedia Influences → Organizational Influences	.672	.000	.672
Extramedia Influences → Within-Media Influences	.000	.456	.456
Extramedia Influences → Content Influence/Outcome	.000	.568	.568
Organizational Influences → Within-Media Influences	.679	.000	.679
Organizational Influences → Content Influence/Outcome	.447	.399	.846
Within-Media Influences → Content Influence/Outcome	.587	.000	.587

Note: The table shows the direct, indirect, and total effects that the first variable in a row has on the other variable in the same row. The numbers in the table are interpreted as path coefficients. Direct effects represent how one variable *directly* affects another variable in the model. For example, the direct effect of Organizational Influences (ninth row) on Content Influence/Outcome is .447. Organizational Influences also has an indirect (mediating) effect on Content Influence/Outcome. That is, it also first affects Within-Media Influences (See Figure 4.5) and then affects Content Influence/Outcome. Thus, it has a mediating effect of .399. Indirect effects are estimated as the product of the direct effects that include them. In this case, Organizational →Within-Media = .679 and Within-Media →Content Influence/Outcome = .587, so .679 X .587 = .399. The total effects column represents the sum of all direct and indirect effects of one variable on another in each of the rows listed in the table. Therefore, the total effect of Organizational Influences on Content Influence/Outcome is .846. The result indicates that Content Influence/Outcome is expected to increase by .846 for each standard deviation change in Organizational Influences via all direct and indirect causal paths between these variables (.447 direct effect + .399 indirect effect = .846 total effect).

As mentioned earlier, Mardia's coefficient of multivariate kurtosis was slightly inflated (6.077), indicating that the data may be non-normal.[303] Although this value was not particularly high, the Maximum Likelihood estimates just reported were compared with bootstrapped results as a precautionary measure. Specifically, AMOS 7.0 was used to execute bootstrapping using 2,000 samples with replacement, and the estimates and standard errors were compared with those from the full data set (n=612). Results indicated that there were no sizeable differences, which further substantiated the findings from the initial runs of the model (See Appendix 10. Unstandardized Maximum Likelihood Estimates versus Bootstrapped Estimates using 2000 Samples with Replacement). Therefore, the Maximum Likelihood estimates have been reported.

Summary of Model Testing

The findings presented from testing the model provide one account of how television reporters perceive external and internal forces as influencing media content and coverage decisions.   Although the size of the market in which the survey respondent worked did not have a *direct* effect on perceptions of content influences, as originally hypothesized, it did eventually affect reporters' perceptions of these influences *indirectly*, as shown in Figure 4.5. In other words, market size's influence on content was first mediated by all other constructs in the model (i.e., extramedia, organizational, and within-media influences). Instead, market size only had a significant direct influence on extramedia influences, such as the amount of advertiser, political, and public relations pressures. Specifically, as the size of the market increased, reporters' perceptions of occurrences of extramedia pressures decreased. Overall,

---

[303]Refer to the *Missing Values and Data Screening* section in Chapter 3. See footnote 273 for an explanation of Mardia's coefficient.

this finding suggests that smaller-market media professionals may perceive more instances of pressures from extramedia sources, while those in larger markets experience fewer.

Furthermore, extramedia influences had a positive, direct effect on organizational influences, suggesting that more reports of influences from outside the media coincided with increased pressures from organizational sources, such as owners and top-level executives. These same extramedia sources, however, did not appear to have a direct effect on those working within the media entity itself (Within-Media Influences). Instead, pressures from these outside sources were first mediated through those at the organizational level, indicating an indirect influence on both those decision-makers working within the station and eventually on content and coverage decisions.

As illustrated by the validated model (See Figure 4.5), organizational influences affected reporters' perceptions of influences on content both indirectly, as mediated through decision-makers working within the station itself, and directly. Both relationships were positive, suggesting that more reports of pressure from these sources resulted in higher levels of influence on content and coverage decisions. Taken as a whole, the model demonstrates how extramedia, organizational, and within-media influences and market size act together to affect media content and coverage decisions from an agenda- and frame-building and agenda-cutting perspective.

**Stage Two: Construct and Parameter Assessments—
Testing the Hypotheses and Research Questions**

Hypothesis 1: Reporters who believe that an inadequate or reduced staff size can hurt the quality of or have negative effects on news coverage will also report more instances of public relations pressures. That is, the Staff Size Pressure Measure will be positively correlated with Public Relations Pressures.

The first hypothesis examined the relationship between the public relations pressure

and staff pressure scales. As previously noted, the staff size pressure scale consisted of

questions asking respondents about their perceptions of staff size effects on news coverage,

not actual staff size at the station where they worked. To test this relationship, a bivariate

correlation analysis was used to evaluate the two scales. Results suggest that those who

believe that an inadequate or reduced staff size has negative effects on coverage and/or

quality also reported more instances of pressures from public relations practitioners, thus

indicating a positive relationship [$r_{(610)} = .159$, $p < .001$]. Therefore, hypothesis 1 was

supported. It is important, however, to note the small effect size, which indicates that 3% of

the variance in reporters' perceptions of *public relations pressures* is accounted for by its

linear relationship with *staff size pressures*. This observation could indicate that the

significant relationship between the two variables may possibly be attributed to the large

sample size. As a result, the effect size of this significant relationship should be considered

when generalizing this finding and applying it to future studies.

Hypothesis 2: Reporters who believe that an inadequate or reduced staff size can hurt the quality of or have negative effects on news coverage will also report more instances of influences on media content and coverage decisions. That is, the Staff Size Pressure Measure will be positively correlated with Overall Influences/Outcome on News Content and Coverage Decisions.

131

Hypothesis 2 evaluated relationship between staff size pressures and overall influences on content.[304] To test this relationship, a bivariate correlation analysis was conducted to compute a correlation coefficient between the two scales. The results indicate a positive relationship between the staff size pressure scale and overall influence/effect on content, thus supporting hypothesis 2 [$r_{(610)} = .153$, $p < .001$]. Specifically, findings suggest that reporters who perceive an inadequate or reduced staff size as hurting the quality of and/or negatively affecting coverage also report more overall instances of influences on television media content. As with the previous hypothesis, the effect size for the relationship between *staff size pressures* and Overall Influences on Content was small and should be noted when applying the current findings.

Research Question 1: *Does adding market size as a control variable affect the strength of the relationships in the first two hypotheses (i.e., (H1) Staff Size Pressure and PR Pressure; and (H2) Staff Size Pressure and Overall Influence/Outcome on Content)?*

To answer the first research question, partial correlation analyses were conducted to examine the relationships between the Staff Size Pressure measure with both PR Pressure and Influence/Outcome on Content and news coverage decisions, partialling out the effects of Market Size. In other words, this type of analysis examines the linear relationship between the variables while holding the size of the respondents' media markets constant. Since a majority of the reporters work in the larger, 1-25 DMAs, controlling for market size also helps to level the playing field in terms of responses and their meaning with regard to relationships between the variables.

---

[304]Refer to footnote 292 for information on changing this originally latent variable into an observed variable for the purpose of the analyses in this section.

After the analyses, the partial correlation coefficients were compared with the
bivariate (zero-order) coefficients to determine whether market size influenced the strength
of the aforementioned relationships. If the size of the respondents' media market was the
sole determinant of variables' relationships, the partial correlations would be equal to zero.[305]
Both correlations remained significant, and the coefficient for hypothesis 2 (Staff Size
Pressure & Content Influence/Outcome) increased in magnitude; the effect size for the first
hypothesis, however, was unchanged (see Table 4.4). The results suggest that market size
has no influence on the relationship between reporter's perceptions of staff size pressures and
pressures from public relations professionals. It does, however, slightly intensify the
relationship between reporters' perceptions of staff size pressures and their perceptions of
influences on news content and coverage decisions. Still, there are significant relationships
beyond what might be accounted for by market size, as suggested by the coefficients
presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4. *Bivariate and Partial Correlation Comparisons of Staff Size Pressure, PR Pressure, and Influence/Outcome on Content*

	Bivariate	Partial	Change
(H1) Staff Size Pressure & PR Pressure	.159**	.159**	-----
(H2) Staff Size Pressure & Content Influence/Outcome	.153**	.164**	+ .011

**p < .001

---

[305]Samuel B. Green and Neil J. Salkind, *Using SPSS for Windows and Macintosh: Analyzing and Understanding Data*, 4th ed. (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Education, Inc., 2005), 263, 271.

Hypotheses 3 through 6: *Market size will have (H3) a negative relationship with the overall influences/effects on content decisions; (H4) a negative relationship with advertiser pressures; (H5) a positive relationship with pressures from politicians and government officials; and (H6) a negative relationship with public relations pressures.*

To evaluate hypotheses 3 through 6, bivariate correlation analyses were conducted to examine the relationships between the size of the markets in which the responding reporters worked and reporters' perceptions of (a) overall influences/effects on content; (b) pressures from advertisers; (c) political/government official pressures; and (d) pressures from public relations practitioners. Hypotheses 3 through 5 were supported, as reporters working in smaller markets described (H3) more overall influences on media content [$r_{(610)}$ = -.122, p = .001]; (H4) more instances of advertiser pressure [$r_{(610)}$ = -.233, p < .001]; and (H5) fewer instances of political pressure [$r_{(610)}$ = .100, p < .010]. In the overall sense, these results suggest that smaller-market stations may be more susceptible to Influences on Media Content and Coverage Decisions than those in larger media markets. Furthermore, the stronger negative relationship between Market Size and *advertiser pressures* indicates that smaller-market stations may be more susceptible to pressures from advertisers than their larger-market brethren, based on reporters' perceptions. Conversely, as expected, television stations in larger markets are more likely to experience pressures from politicians and/or government officials than those in smaller market areas. Although the predictions for the third through fifth hypotheses were supported, hypothesis 6, which posited a negative relationship between public relations pressures and market size, was not [$r_{(610)}$ = .002, p = .478]. In fact, no significant relationship was found, suggesting that market size is not related to reporters' perceptions of instances of influences from public relations practitioners. In other words, reporters working for smaller markets do not necessarily experience more pressure from PR professionals.

Once again it is important to point out the small effect sizes, which might indicate that the significant relationships found among the variables *may* be attributed to the larger sample size. The fact that the sample was more heavily representative of reporters from larger media markets may also explain the smaller coefficients. This notion is further discussed in Chapter 5.

Research Question 2: *After taking into account the other two components, how well does each measure of extramedia influences predict influences on news content and coverage decisions? That is, what is the unique contribution of each extramedia influence measure on the content outcomes after partialing out the contributions of the other two measures?*

Hypothesis 7: *The advertiser pressures measure is the strongest extramedia predictor of outcomes/influences on news content and coverage decisions.*

To answer the second research question and hypothesis 7, a multiple regression analysis was used to examine the influence of each extramedia measure (advertiser, public relations, and political/government official pressures) on the overall influence/outcome on media content after controlling for the contributions of the other two variables. The analysis was first set up to run the direct solution in which all three independent variables were entered simultaneously. The correlation matrix representing the interrelationships among the variables is presented in Table 4.5. As indicated, all three extramedia measures are significantly related to the dependent variable, content influence/outcome. Furthermore, all three independent variables are significantly related to each other, which was be expected given that they all measure the same underlying construct (Extramedia Influences).[306]

---

[306]The stronger correlation between Public Relations Pressures and Political Pressures is likely due to the fact that they are both forms of information subsidies, which was discussed in stage one of the study during the SEM assessment. The fact that they are more highly correlated with each other than with the dependent variable, however, could be a source of error in explaining the total variance explained. Therefore, this relationship is considered when interpreting the final results of the analysis.

Table 4.5. *Correlation Matrix (Full Regression Model) for Extramedia Influence Measures and Overall Influence/Outcome on Media Content*

	Content Infl./Outcome	Advertiser Pressure	PR Pressure	Political/Gov't Official Pressure
Content Infl./Outcome	1.00	.425**	.303**	.270**
Advertiser Pressure		1.00	.303**	.337**
PR Pressure			1.00	.539**
Political/Gov't Official Pressure				1.00

$n = 612$; ** $p < .001$

Results of the full regression model indicate that a linear combination of the three independent variables, the extramedia measures, explains 22% (21% adjusted) of the variance in overall influences on content, the dependent variable [$F (3,608) = 56.025$, $p < .001$). More specifically, this direct solution indicates that a combination of the three measures significantly predicts reporters' perceptions of influences on media content. The results of the full regression model are shown in Table 4.6. Findings indicate that both the *Advertiser* and *PR Pressures* measures make significant individual contributions to explaining the variance in reporters' perceptions of influences on media content [Advertiser t = 9.176, $p < .001$; PR t = 3.744, $p < .001$]. *Political/Government Officials Pressure*, however, does not [t = 1.462, $p = .144$], even though the full regression model was significant.

Table 4.6. *Full Regression Model for Three Extramedia Measures Predicting Overall Content Influence/Outcome*

	B	SE B	β	t-statistic	p-level
Constant	13.683	1.238	-----	-----	-----
Advertiser Pressure	.503	.055	.354	9.176	< .001
PR Pressure	.312	.083	.162	3.744	< .001
Political/Gov't Official Pressure	.079	.054	.064	1.462	.144

n = 612; B = Unstandardized (Raw) Coefficient; SE B = Standard Errors of the Unstandardized (Raw) Coefficients; β = Standardized Beta Weight

A commonality analysis was conducted to describe the interrelationships among the variables in more detail. Specifically, this analysis explains how the independent variables combine to explain the dependent variable, and it also reveals which is the strongest predictor. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 4.7. In support of hypothesis 7, the *Advertiser Pressures* measure is the strongest predictor in the overall regression model, as it explains 18% of the variance in reporters' perceptions of influences on media content with a unique contribution of nearly 11% [t = 11.582, p < .001].[307] *Public Relations Pressures* makes the second largest contribution in explaining the dependent variable, *Content Influence/Outcome*, with 9.2% and a unique contribution of nearly 2% [t = 7.863, p < .001]. Finally, the *Political/Government Official Pressures* measure explains 7.3% of variation in the dependent variable, making a unique contribution of only .3% [t = 6.934, p < .001].

---

[307]The t-statistics in this section describing the results of the commonality analysis are from the regression analyses in which the independent variables were entered in different orders. The tables with this information are not shown in order to maintain clarity and to preserve space for more essential elements of the analyses.

Table 4.7. *Commonality Analysis for Extramedia Influences/Content Outcome*
Model with Three Predictors

	Advertiser (Adv)	PR	Political/Gov't (Political)
Unique to Adv	.109	-----	-----
Unique to PR	-----	.018	-----
Unique to Political	-----	-----	.003
Common to Adv & PR	.017	.017	-----
Common to Adv & Political	.013	-----	.013
Common to PR & Political	-----	.016	.016
Common to All	.041	.041	.041
Totals	.180	.092	.073

Note: Figures represent R^2 values.

One of the goals of multiple regression is to explain the largest amount of variance with the fewest number of variables. Although it may seem that the most parsimonious model for explaining variation in reporters' perceptions of influences on content may include only pressure from advertisers (Advertiser Pressures) and public relations practitioners (PR Pressures), the third extramedia measure, *Political/Government Official Pressures*, contributes to this explanation in combination with these other variables. That is, it may not be *essential* for inclusion in the overall regression model for the sake of parsimony; however, it is relevant because it contributes in conjunction with the other extramedia measures.

The full regression model with all three extramedia influence measures explains 22% of the variation in reporters' perceptions of influences on content, the dependent variable. Results from the multiple regression analysis suggest that as advertisers, public relations

professionals, and politicians and governmental officials exert more pressure on the media, the more influence they have on media content and coverage decisions, as based on reporters' perceptions. This relationship is especially evident with advertisers, as this source of influence is the strongest predictor in the model. The regression equation is as follows:

Content Influence/Outcome = .503*Adv + .312*PR + .079*Political/Gov't Official + 13.683.

Research Question 3: *After taking into account the other two components, how well does each measure of organizational influences (staff size pressure measure, economic pressure, and owner/executive pressure) predict influences on news content and coverage decisions? That is, what is the unique contribution of each organizational influence measure on the content outcomes after partialing out the contributions of the other two measures?*

Hypothesis 8: *The owner/executive pressures measure is the strongest organizational predictor of outcomes/influences on news content and coverage decisions.*

Multiple regression was used to analyze how media content is influenced by each measure of organizational influence considered in the study (staff, economic, and owner/executive pressures) after controlling for the contributions of the other two scales. The regression analysis running the direct solution was first executed. As indicated in the correlation matrix in Table 4.8, all three organizational measures are significantly related to the dependent variable, *Content Influence/Outcome*. As expected, all three predictor variables are also significantly related to each other, as they measure the same underlying construct (organizational influences).

Table 4.8. *Correlation Matrix (Full Regression Model) for Organizational Influence Measures and Overall Influence/Outcome on Media Content*

	Content Infl./Outcome	Staff Pressure	Economic Pressure	Owner/Exec Pressure
Content Infl./Outcome	1.00	.153**	.592**	.609**
Staff Pressure		1.00	.331**	.151**
Economic Pressure			1.00	.531**
Owner/Exec Pressure				1.00

n = 612; ** p < .001

The full regression model indicates that a linear combination of the three organizational measures, explains 47.2% (47% adjusted) of the variation in Content Influence/Outcome, the dependent variable [F (3,608) = 181.504, p < .001). Specifically, this direct solution indicates that a combination of the three measures significantly predicts reporters' perceptions of influences on media content. The results of the full regression model are shown in Table 4.9. Findings indicate that both the *Economic* and *Owner/Executive Pressure* measures make significant unique contributions to explaining the variance in reporters' perceptions of influences on media content [Economic t = 10.594, p < .001; Owner/Exec t = 11.775, p < .001]; however, the *Staff Size Pressure* measure does not [t = -1.162, p = .246].[308]

---

[308]This latter measure's standardized beta weight is negative while the correlation coefficient is positive, indicating that it may be a suppressor variable. See footnote 315 for information concerning suppression.

Table 4.9. *Full Regression Model for Three Organizational Measures Predicting Overall Content Influence/Outcome*

	B	SE B	β	t-statistic	p-level
Constant	12.566	1.674	-----	-----	-----
Staff Size Pressure	-.162	.140	-.036	-1.162	.246
Economic Pressure	.510	.048	.386	10.594	< .001
Owner/Exec Pressure	.736	.063	.410	11.775	< .001

n = 612; B = Unstandardized (Raw) Coefficient; SE B = Standard Errors of the Unstandardized (Raw) Coefficients; β = Standardized Beta Weight

A commonality analysis was conducted to more fully describe the interrelationships among the variables. As illustrated in Table 4.10, *Owner/Executive Pressure* explains 37% of the variance in reporters' perceptions of influences on media content with a unique contribution of nearly 12% [t = 18.978, p < .001],[309] making it the strongest predictor in the overall regression model. Therefore, hypothesis 8, which predicted that pressure from owners and top-level executives was the dominant organizational influence, was accepted. *Economic Pressure* makes the second largest contribution in explaining the dependent variable, *Content Influence/Outcome*, with 35% and a unique contribution of nearly 10% [t = 18.129, p < .001]. Finally, the *Staff Size Pressure* measure explained 2.3% of variation in the dependent variable while making virtually no individual contribution with .1% [t = 3.831, p < .001].

---

[309]The t-statistics in this section describing the results of the commonality analysis are from the regression analyses in which the independent variables were entered in different orders. The tables with this information are not shown in order to maintain clarity and to preserve space for more essential elements of the analyses.

Table 4.10. *Commonality Analysis for Organizational Influences/Content Outcome Model with Three Predictors*

	Staff	Economic (Econ)	Owner/Executive (Owner/Exec)
Unique to Staff	.001	-----	-----
Unique to Econ	-----	.097	-----
Unique to Owner/Exec	-----	-----	.120
Common to Staff & Econ	.003	.003	-----
Common to Staff & Owner/Exec	.001	-----	.001
Common to Econ & Owner/Exec	-----	.232	.232
Common to All	.018	.018	.018
Totals	.023	.350	.371

Note: Figures represent R^2 values.

Given the fact that the *Staff Size Pressure* measure makes virtually no unique or joint contribution in explaining the dependent variable, it appears that the most parsimonious model for predicting influences on media content includes only two independent variables—*Economic* and *Owner/Executive Pressures.* Therefore, a regression analysis was run on this two-variable model. By excluding the *Staff Size Pressure* measure, the total variance explained stays at 47%, but the F statistic shows a large jump [$F_{(2,609)} = 271.425$, $p < .001$]. Furthermore, all variables included in the new two-predictor regression model make significant contributions, as shown in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11. *Full Regression Model for Two Organizational Measures Predicting Overall Content Influence/Outcome*

	B	SE B	β	t-statistic	p-level
Constant	10.864	.810	-----	-----	-----
Economic Pressure	.494	.046	.373	10.734	< .001
Owner/Exec Pressure	.739	.063	.411	11.813	< .001

n = 612; B = Unstandardized (Raw) Coefficient; SE B = Standard Errors of the Unstandardized (Raw) Coefficients; β = Standardized Beta Weight

Another commonality analysis was conducted to more fully describe the interrelationships among the variables in the new regression model. The results presented in Table 4.12 indicate that the contributions made by *Owner/Executive* and *Economic Pressure* in explaining the variation in the dependent variable are partially achieved in combination with each other, as is evidenced by the 25% contribution that is "common to both." Still, each of these organizational measures makes a significant unique contribution to explaining variation in reporters' perceptions of influences on media content [Owner/Exec t = 18.978, p < .001; Econ t = 18.129, p < .001].

Table 4.12. *Commonality Analysis for Organizational Influences/Content Outcome Model with Two Predictors*

	Economic (Econ)	Owner/Executive (Owner/Exec)
Unique to Econ	.100	-----
Unique to Owner/Exec	-----	.121
Common to both	.250	.250
Totals	.350	.371

Note: Figures represent R^2 values.

The revised regression model with only two organizational influence measures influence explains 47% of the variation in reporters' perceptions of influences on content, the dependent variable. Overall findings suggest that as reporters perceive more instances of bottom-line, economic pressures, as well as pressures coming from owners and top-level executives, the more they perceive these sources as having an influence on content and coverage decisions. This relationship is especially apparent with owners/top-level executives, as this source of influence is the strongest predictor in the model. Results from the multiple regression analysis suggest that although staff pressures (*Staff Size Pressure*) is also a predictor of the reporters' perceptions of content influences, the variation that it explains is almost wholly achieved in combination with the other two variables that were included in the final model. Therefore, staff pressures should not necessarily be discounted as a predictor of content influences, but instead it is unnecessary to include in the most parsimonious model, at least for the scope of the current study. The final regression equation is as follows: **Content Influence/Outcome = .494*Econ + .739*Owner/Exec + 10.864.**

Research Question 4: How well does each measure of extramedia influences predict the level of agenda cutting after taking into account the other two components? That is, what is the unique contribution of each measure on the agenda cutting content outcome after partialing out the contributions of the other two extramedia measures?

Hypothesis 9: The advertiser pressures measure is the strongest extramedia predictor of instances of agenda cutting.

To answer the fourth research question and hypothesis 9, a multiple regression analysis was used to examine the influence of each extramedia measure (advertiser, public relations, and political/government official pressures) on the *Level of Agenda Cutting* after controlling for the contributions of the other two measures. The analysis was first set up to run the direct solution. The correlation matrix representing the interrelationships among the

variables is presented in Table 4.13. As indicated, all three extramedia measures are

significantly related to the dependent variable, as well as to each other.

Table 4.13. *Correlation Matrix (Full Regression Model) for Extramedia Influence Measures and Level of Agenda Cutting*

	Level of Agenda Cutting	Advertiser Pressure	PR Pressure	Political/Gov't Official Pressure
Level of Agenda Cutting	1.00	.463**	.236**	.175**
Advertiser Pressure		1.00	.303**	.337**
PR Pressure			1.00	.539**
Political/Gov't Official Pressure				1.00

n = 612; ** p < .001

Results of the full regression model indicate that a linear combination of the three

extramedia measures, explains 22.6% (22.2% adjusted) of the variance in the *Level of*

Agenda Cutting [F (3,608) = 59.014, p < .001). More specifically, this direct solution

indicates that a combination of the three measures significantly predicts reporters'

perceptions of frequency of agenda cutting influences on media. The results of the full

regression model are shown in Table 4.14, and the findings indicate that both the *Advertiser*

and *PR Pressures* measures make significant individual contributions to explaining the

variance in reporters' perceptions of instances of agenda cutting [Advertiser t = 11.433, p <

.001; PR t = 2.912, p < .010]. *Political/Government Official Pressure*, however, does not [t =

-.927, p = .354], even though the full regression model was significant.

Table 4.14. *Full Regression Model for Three Extramedia Measures Predicting the*
             Level of Agenda Cutting

	B	SE B	β	t-statistic	p-level
Constant	14.770	1.529	-----	-----	-----
Advertiser Pressure	.775	.068	.439	11.433	< .001
PR Pressure	.300	.103	.125	2.912	< .010
Political/Gov't Official Pressure	-.062	.067	-.040	-.927	.354

n = 612; B = Unstandardized (Raw) Coefficient; SE B = Standard Errors of the
Unstandardized (Raw) Coefficients; β = Standardized Beta Weight

A commonality analysis was conducted to describe the interrelationships among the

variables in more detail. As previously mentioned, this analysis explains how the

independent variables combine to explain variation in the dependent variable, and it also

reveals which is the biggest predictor. As illustrated in Table 4.15, the *Advertiser Pressures*

measure is by far the strongest predictor in the overall regression model, explaining 21.4% of

the variance in reporters' perceptions of instances of agenda cutting with a unique

contribution of nearly 17% [t = 12.899, p < .001].[310] Therefore, hypothesis 9, which

predicted that pressure from advertisers was the strongest extramedia influence, was

accepted. *Public Relations Pressures* makes the second largest contribution in explaining the

dependent variable, *Level of Agenda Cutting,* with nearly 6% and a unique contribution of

1.1% [t = 6.006, p < .001]. Finally, the *Political/Government Official Pressures* measure

_____

[310]The t-statistics in this section describing the results of the commonality analysis are from the
regression analyses in which the independent variables were entered in different orders. The tables with this
information are not shown in order to maintain clarity and to preserve space for more essential elements of the
analyses.

explains 3.1% of variation in the dependent variable, making a unique contribution of only

.2% [t = 4.390, p < .001].[311]

Table 4.15. *Commonality Analysis for Extramedia Influences/Agenda Cutting Model with Three Predictor Variables*

	Advertiser (Adv)	PR	Political/Gov't (Political)
Unique to Adv	.167	-----	-----
Unique to PR	-----	.011	-----
Unique to Political	-----	-----	.002
Common to Adv & PR	.017	.017	-----
Common to Adv & Political	.001	-----	.001
Common to PR & Political	-----	-.001	-.001
Common to All	.029	.029	.029
Totals	.214	.056	.031

Note: Figures represent R^2 values.

Since the *Political/Gov't Official Pressure* measure makes virtually no unique or joint

contribution in explaining the dependent variable, it appears that the most parsimonious

model for predicting instance of agenda cutting includes only two predictor variables—

Advertiser and *Public Relations Pressures*. Thus, a new regression analysis was run on this

two-variable model. By excluding the *Political/Gov't Official Pressure* measure, the total

variance explained remains around the 22% mark (22.4%; 22.2% adjusted), but the F-statistic

[311]It should be noted here that suppression could be present since the combined contribution of PR Pressures and Political/Gov't Pressure is -.001. The effect, however, should not be an issue since it is virtually nonexistent (-.001 = -.1%). Furthermore, measure's standardized beta weight is negative while the correlation coefficient is positive, indicating that it may be a net suppressor variable (see Table 4.14). See footnote 315 for more information about suppression.

shows a fairly large jump [F (2,609) = 88.111, p < .001]. Additionally, both variables in this new regression model make significant contributions, as shown in Table 4.16.

Table 4.16. *Full Regression Model for Two Extramedia Measures Predicting the Level of Agenda Cutting*

	B	SE B	β	t-statistic	p-level
Constant	10.864	.810	-----	-----	-----
Advertiser Pressure	.494	.046	.373	10.734	< .001
PR Pressure	.739	.063	.411	11.813	< .001

n = 612; B = Unstandardized (Raw) Coefficient; β = Standardized Beta Weight

To further explain the interrelationships between the variables in the new two-variable regression model, another commonality analysis was conducted. The results in Table 4.17 show that the unique contributions of the Advertiser and PR Pressure variables remains that same at 17% (16.8) and 1%, respectively, but the common contribution increases slight to 4.6%.[312]

Table 4.17. *Commonality Analysis for Extramedia Influences/Agenda Cutting Model with Two Predictors*

	Advertiser (ADV)	PR
Unique to ADV	.168	-----
Unique to PR	-----	.010
Common to both	.046	.046
Totals	.214	.056

Note: Figures represent R^2 values.

---

[312]ADV t = 12,899, p < .001; PR t = 6.006, p < .001. These statistics are from the regression analyses in which the independent variables were entered in different orders. The tables with this information are omitted to maintain clarity and to preserve space for more essential elements of the analyses.

The revised regression model using only two extramedia influence measures explains 22.4% (22.2% adjusted) of the variance in the dependent variable, reporters' perceptions of agenda-cutting occurrences. Overall findings suggest that more instances of pressures from advertisers and public relations professionals lead to more instances of agenda-cutting effects on news content, based on reporters' perceptions. That is, reporters perceive that the more TV stations are pressured by advertisers and PR practitioners the more likely these news organizations are to keep certain items off of their news agendas, thereby influencing content through agenda-cutting effects. This relationship is especially apparent with influences from advertisers, by far the strongest predictor in the model. Results suggest that although pressures from politicians and government officials is a predictor of reporters' perceptions of agenda-cutting occurrences, the variation that it explains is achieved in combination with the other two variables that were included in the model.[313] As a result, Political/Gov't Officials Pressures should not necessarily be dismissed as a predictor of instances of agenda cutting. Instead, it is merely unnecessary to include in the most parsimonious model for predicting this dependent variable, at least for the scope of the current study. The final regression equation for the two-variable model is **Level of Agenda Cutting = .761*ADV + .253*PR + 14.250.**

---

[313]This explanation is evident by examining the Table 4.15. Although the total contribution of the Political/Gov't Officials Pressure measure is 3.1%, a majority of this percentage is from the amount that is "Common to All" variables (2.9%).

Research Question 5: *How well does each measure of organizational influences predict the level of agenda cutting after taking into account the other two components? That is, what is the unique contribution of each measure on the agenda cutting content outcome after partialing out the contributions of the other two organizational measures?*

Hypothesis 10: *The owner/executive pressure measure is the strongest organizational predictor of instances of agenda cutting.*

To answer the final research question and hypothesis of the study, another multiple regression analysis was used to examine the influence of each organizational measure (staff, economic, and owner/executive pressures) on the reporter perceptions of agenda-cutting occurrences after controlling for the contributions of the other two scales. As with the previous assessments, the analysis was first set up to run the direct solution in which all three independent variables were entered concurrently. The correlation matrix representing the interrelationships among the variables is presented in Table 4.18. As indicated, all three organizational measures significantly correlate with the dependent variable, level of agenda cutting. All three independent variables are also significantly related to each other, but no relationship is large enough to warrant suspicion of multicollinearity.

Table 4.18. *Correlation Matrix (Full Regression Model) for Organizational Influence Measures and Level of Agenda Cutting*

	Level of Agenda Cutting	Staff Pressure	Economic Pressure	Owner/Exec Pressure
Level of Agenda Cutting	1.00	.116*	.616**	.675**
Staff Pressure		1.00	.331**	.151**
Economic Pressure			1.00	.531**
Owner/Exec Pressure				1.00

n = 612; * p < .010; ** p < .001

Results of the full regression model indicate that a linear combination of the three independent variables explains 55.4% (55.2% adjusted) of the variance in the dependent variable, instances of agenda cutting. More specifically, this direct solution indicates that a combination of the three measures significantly predicts reporters' perceptions of agenda-cutting effects on news content [F (3,608) = 251.858, p < .001). As shown in Table 4.19, each organizational level influence measure makes significant individual contributions to the overall regression model.

Table 4.19. *Full Regression Model for Three Organizational Measures Predicting the Level of Agenda Cutting*

	B	SE B	β	t-statistic	p-level
Constant	12.391	1.912	-----	-----	-----
Staff Pressure	-.470	.159	-.085	-2.949	< .010
Economic Pressure	.638	.055	.388	11.588	< .001
Owner/Exec Pressure	1.075	.071	.481	15.050	< .001

n = 612; B = Unstandardized (Raw) Coefficient; SE B = Standard Errors of the Unstandardized (Raw) Coefficients; β = Standardized Beta Weight

A commonality analysis was conducted to better evaluate the interrelationships among the variables. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 4.20. In support of hypothesis 10, the *Owner/Executive Pressure* measure is the strongest predictor in the overall regression model, as it explains 45.5% of the variance in reporters' perceptions of agenda-cutting occurrences, with a unique contribution of 17% [t = 22.586, p < .001].[314] *Economic Pressure* accounts for 38% of the variation in the dependent variable, with a

_____

[314]The t-statistics in this section describing the results of the commonality analysis are from the regression analyses in which the independent variables were entered in different orders. The tables with this information are omitted to maintain clarity and to preserve space for more essential elements of the analyses.

unique contribution of 10% [t = 19.314, p < .001]. The *Staff Pressure* measure makes the

smallest contribution, 1.4%, in explaining the variation in the level of agenda cutting, making

a unique contribution of only 1% (.6) [t = 2.896, p < .010].[315]

Table 4.20. *Commonality Analysis for Full Organizational Influences/Agenda Cutting Model with Three Predictors*

	Staff	Economic (Econ)	Owner/Executive (Owner/Exec)
Unique to Staff	.006	-----	-----
Unique to Econ	-----	.098	-----
Unique to Owner/Exec	-----	-----	.166
Common to Staff & Econ	-.005	-.005	-----
Common to Staff & Owner/Exec	.003	-----	.003
Common to Econ & Owner/Exec	-----	.276	.276
Common to All	.010	.010	.010
Totals	.014	.379	.455

Note: Figures represent R^2 values.

---

[315]Suppression *may* present since the contribution that is common to Staff and Economic Pressures is -.005. Furthermore, the signs of Staff Pressure's regression weight and its correlation coefficient are opposite, suggesting possible negative, or net, suppression (see Tables 4.18 and 4.19). According to Tabachnik and Fidell, "if a suppressor variable is identified, it is properly interpreted as a variable that enhances the importance of other IVs by virtue of suppression of the irrelevant variance in them" (*see* Barbara G. Tabachnick and Linda S. Fidell, *Using Multivariate Statistics,* 4th ed. (Needham Heights, Mass.: Allyn and Bacon, 2001), 149. Therefore, net suppression, if indeed present, does not necessarily present a detrimental situation for the researcher. Currently, there is no statistical means to evaluate the magnitude by which the regression weight and correlation need to differ to identify suppression (see Richard L. Smith, Joel W. Ager, Jr., and David L. Williams, "Suppressor Variables in Multiple Regression/Correlation," *Education & Psychological Measurement* 52, no. 1 (spring 1992): 17-29.)

Overall findings suggest that the more TV stations have to contend with economic and staff pressures, as well as pressures from owners and top-level executive, the more likely agenda-cutting effects on coverage decisions are likely to occur. Again, these findings are based upon reporters' perceptions of these influences and their effects on content—in this case, not covering a particular topic (agenda cutting). This relationship is especially apparent with owners/top-level executives, as this source of influence is the strongest predictor in the model. The final regression equation follows: **Level of Agenda Cutting = 1.075*Owner/Exec + .638*Econ - .470*Staff + 12.391.**

Data Screening

As previously mentioned, regression analysis requires that more stringent assumptions be met than both correlation analysis and SEM. This study followed the techniques suggested by Karakostas to ensure the data were appropriate for analysis. Briefly, this method consists of (1) grouping the predicted values into categories; (2) performing a one-way ANOVA to determine whether the residual means are equal across the categories; and (3) running a Levene's test to determine if the variances of the residuals are equal across categories.[316] The regression residuals were slightly skewed and kurtotic for RQ4, and one of the residual groups in RQ5 showed a small level of skewness. Furthermore, the assumption of homoscedasticity appeared to be violated for second, fourth, and fifth research questions.[317] Given this information, all four regression analyses were re-evaluated using 2,000 bootstrapped samples with replacement in Systat 12.0. The bootstrapped parameter

---

[316]K.X. Karakostas, "Interpreting Regression Diagnostics," *Journal of Educational and Behavioral Statistics* 29, no. 3 (fall 2004): 370.

[317]The Shapiro-Wilks test results also suggested possible non-normality for a couple of the groups of residuals in research questions three and five.

estimates and standard errors showed no major differences from the original results, which suggests that the possible non-normality of the actual data file had no marked effects on the regression analyses (See Appendix 11. Parameter Estimates and Standard Errors of the Actual Data Set versus the Bootstrapped Data Set). Thus, all reported values are based on the actual data set.

Summary of Stage Two Findings: Construct and Parameter Assessments

The results of the correlation and multiple regression analyses confirm all but one of the hypotheses posed in the study. The bivariate correlation analyses indicated a positive relationship between (H1) *Staff Size Pressures* and *Public Relations Pressures*; (H2) *Staff Size Pressures* and Overall Influence on News Content and Coverage Decisions; and (H5) Market Size and instances of *Political Pressures*. The findings confirmed a negative relationship between market size and (H3) Overall Influence on Content and Coverage Decisions and (H4) *Advertiser Pressures*. Although a negative correlation was predicted for Market Size and instances of *Public Relations Pressures* (H6), this hypothesis was rejected. In fact, the correlation coefficient was almost zero ($r_{(610)} = .002$, $p = .478$), indicating no relationship between the two variables.

Research question one assessed the general influence of Market Size as a control variable on the relationships evaluated in the first two hypotheses (i.e., (H1) *Staff Size Pressures & PR Pressures* and (H2) *Staff Size Pressures* & Content Influence/Outcome). Results from the partial correlation analyses indicated that Market Size had no effect on the relationship between *staff* and *public relations pressures*; however, holding Market Size constant resulted in a slightly stronger relationship between *staff size pressures* and Overall Influence on Content. Still, the findings show that there are significant relationships between

the variables in the first two hypotheses beyond that which might be explained by the size of the respondents' markets. Finally, the multiple regression analyses addressing the second through fifth research questions and hypotheses 7 through 10 identified and confirmed *advertiser pressures* and *owner/executive pressures* as the strongest extramedia and organizational predictors of both overall content influence and *instances of agenda cutting*. The final chapter that follows provides a more in-depth discussion of the results and their practical and theoretical implications, as well as the strengths and limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine through what forces and under what conditions the media are most likely to be influenced and with what effect on news content. That is, how, how often, and under what conditions do external and internal forces attempt to influence the media and their coverage, and to what effect are they successful at doing so? To answer this question, this study used a multi-level research approach in order to provide a more complete picture of the media landscape involving these issues. The overall goal of the study was to examine how extramedia, organizational, and within-media forces influence news content and coverage decisions. The influence outcomes considered in the study are the levels of agenda building, frame building, and agenda cutting. To evaluate these relationships, a comprehensive model of media influences and outcomes was tested using original data from a national Web survey of television reporters. Specifically, the survey assessed reporters' perceptions of the types and instances of influences faced by TV stations across the country, as well as their views of how these sources of pressure actually succeed in influencing news content.

In addition to testing the overall model, this research also assessed relationships among variables that were not directly specified in the first phase of the study. Specifically, the relationships between *staff size pressures* and both *public relations pressures* and *overall influences on news content* were examined, both alone and controlling for *market size*. In

separate analyses, *market size* was also evaluated in relation to *advertiser*, *public relations*, and *political pressures*, as well as to its correlation with *overall influences on content and coverage decisions*. Finally, the incremental strength of the extramedia (*advertiser*, *public relations*, and *political pressures*) and organizational (*staff*, *economic*, and *owner/executive pressures*) influences measures was assessed to determine the strongest predictor of both the *overall influence on news content* and, in particular, *instances of agenda cutting*.

The current, and final, chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section discusses the implications and conclusions from testing the influences on media content (IOMC) model. Second, the specific relationships among the selected constructs and variables within the model are elucidated in more detail. A portion of the discussion includes the study's potential for advancing theory, especially with regard to agenda cutting, as well as its professional implications. The final section covers the strengths and limitations of the study. Directions and suggestions for future research are also included in this section and throughout the chapter as needed.

Implications of the Influences on Media Content (IOMC) Model

In the 1990s, Shoemaker and Reese proposed their hierarchical model of influences depicting how the media's content may be influenced on different levels, ranging from micro to macro, from forces both within and outside of news organizations.[318] Although some research has examined these different forces and their potential effects separately (e.g., public relations or advertising pressures effects on building the media's agenda or frames), seemingly no research has studied how various influences may simultaneously affect news coverage or content decisions. In other words, none have considered the larger, more

---

[318]Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message*.

comprehensive picture. Although Shoemaker and Reese's diagram provides a good basis on

which to guide this type of scholarship, it is not a "testable" model. Furthermore, while

much research has centered on how media content may affect audiences, fewer studies have

taken a step back to consider who or what is influencing the media's decisions—especially

with regard to concurrently examining the three main influence outcomes considered in the

current study (i.e., agenda building, frame building, and agenda cutting). As a result, some

researchers have pointed out that more knowledge is needed about how and by whom the

media agenda is set;[319] how and through what forces media frames are constructed;[320] and

how and why certain news items are simply kept off, or cut out of, the media agenda.[321]

Using the television industry as the foundation, this study addressed these gaps in the

literature by offering a possible explanation of how news content and coverage decisions

may be influenced by forces from both within and outside media organizations. The current

research offers a unique perspective, as it considers how different potential forces of

influence interact to ultimately affect news coverage. Specifically, the IOMC model

illustrates how extramedia, organizational, and within-media influences interrelate to build,

frame, and cut items on the news agenda, based on reporters' perceptions (See Figure 4.5).

*Market Size as a Moderating Influence on Overall Influences/Outcomes on News Content
and Coverage Decisions*

Market size was defined by reverse-coding the respondents' designated market areas

(DMAs). As previously mentioned, the television industry categorizes stations into DMAs,

which are based on the size of the media markets in which they are located. These DMAs

---

[319]For example, see Rogers, Dearing, and Bregman, "The Anatomy of Agenda-Setting Research," 33.

[320]For example, see Scheufele, "Framing as a Theory of Media Effects," 109.

[321]For example, see Wober, "Agenda Cutting."

are classified by numbers—the largest-market stations hold the 1-25 spots, while the smaller-market stations are generally from 76 to more than 200.   For clarity, this variable was reverse-coded so that larger DMA ranks represent larger (rather than smaller) markets, and vice versa.

The hypothesized model originally proposed that Market Size would have a direct effect on Influences on Content and Coverage Decisions, the main dependent variable of the study (See Figure 2.3). That is, it was initially presented as a control variable in the overall structural model. The particular placement in the model was based on previous research suggesting that smaller-market media may be more susceptible to influences on content because of poorer resources or smaller staff sizes with which to produce news, more pronounced economic constraints, or greater pressure from advertisers and other outside sources.[322] Therefore, a negative effect was predicted, indicating that respondents' from smaller-market stations would report more instances of influences on content. Exploratory model testing, however, indicated that this proposed relationship was nonsignificant, and it was suggested that size of the respondents' market had a stronger, more direct negative influence on the Extramedia Influences construct. Simply put, reporters from smaller DMAs perceived more instances of pressures from outside sources, which, for the purposes of the current study, are *advertisers*, *public relations*, and *political pressures*. Market size did ultimately influence reporters' perceptions of overall influences on news content and coverage decisions, but it did so *indirectly*. That is, it first affected reporters' perceptions of influence at the Extramedia level, followed by additional negative relationships at the

---

[322]For example, see McManus, *Market-Driven Journalism*; Soley and Craig, "Advertising Pressures on Newspapers"; Hays and Reisner, "Feeling the Heat from Advertisers;" Soontae An and Lori Bergen, "Advertiser Pressure on Daily Newspapers: A Survey of Advertising Sales Executives," *Journal of Advertising* 36, no. 2 (summer 2007): 111-121.

Organizational and Within-Media Influences levels. In other words, reporters from *smaller* markets perceived *more* instances of pressures from Extramedia sources, as well as *more* accounts of Organizational and Within-Media pressures. These relationships ultimately resulted in *more* instances of overall influences on content, based on reporters' perceptions (see Table 4.3). This finding is logical, especially given evidence from previous research regarding advertiser pressures in small markets. For instance, An and Bergen surveyed advertising directors at daily newspapers and presented them with four ethical scenarios regarding demands from advertisers. They found that directors from the smaller papers were more likely to bow to advertiser pressure and favor content that presented these advertisers in a positive light, thereby avoiding the possibility of offending these revenue generators.[323] Similarly, Soley and Craig found that, although there was no disparity between small versus large circulation papers in terms of *amounts of advertiser pressures*, advertisers were more likely *to succeed in influencing* content at the smaller papers. Editors at the smaller papers also reported significantly more instances of in-house pressures to produce content to please advertisers.[324] In short, market size eventually affected reporters' perceptions of overall influences on content, but this relationship was first mediated by all other constructs in the model.

The Relationship between Extramedia Influences Within-Media Influences

The original hypothesized model proposed that Extramedia Influences would directly affect influences within the media organization (Within-Media), which are measured by *direct* and *indirect pressures from newsroom management* (See Figure 4.3). This

---

[323]An and Bergen, "Advertiser Pressure on Daily Newspapers."

[324]Soley and Craig, "Advertising Pressures on Newspapers," 7.

relationship was largely based on Shoemaker and Reese's multi-level diagram, which suggests that the influence process is not necessarily linear; instead, the different types of influence could (and most likely) simultaneously occur. Although their hierarchical model did not specifically incorporate a "Within-Media Influences" level, which was created for the current study using some of the authors' concepts, it was expected that the construct would exhibit similar process behavior as suggested by the concurrent influence flow among the levels in the "onion" diagram. In other words, it was speculated that the pressure flow from the Extramedia to the Within-Media level would not be a strictly linear (and indirect) one— that is, from Extramedia to Organizational and, finally, to Within-Media. Instead, it was posited that influences at the Extramedia level would also have a *direct* effect on influences within the media organization.

Exploratory model testing suggested that Extramedia Influences did *eventually* affect influences within the media, but the relationship was first mediated by pressures at the Organizational level. That is, forces from outside the media (e.g., advertisers, public relations professionals, and political/governmental officials) do not appear to have a significant amount of *direct* influence over newsroom managers within media organizations, at least within the scope of the current study. Instead, it seems that influences from the Extramedia level are first mediated by forces at the Organizational level and then passed on to managers within the news organization itself. These findings suggest that more pressures from forces outside the media organization correspond with greater pressures at the Organizational level, which are then passed on to Within-Media Influences and eventually to content decisions.

It is important to note, however, that lack of a direct link between the Extramedia and Within-Media levels does not mean that those working outside the media should head straight to owners and top-level executives at the Organizational level to get their particular messages across. For example, a public relations practitioner does not necessarily need to phone and send his or her broadcast news release (BNR) to a TV station *owner* in an attempt to get it covered in the news. Strictly evaluating the results in this manner is a consequence of looking at only one small piece of a larger structure. *Public relations pressure* is only one measure of Extramedia Influence, and it should be interpreted as such—at least for this first phase of the study. Instead, the findings indicate that pressures at the Extramedia level are more strongly, and significantly, related to increased influences at the Organizational level. In other words, they exhibit a stronger association to reporters' perceptions of increased economic pressures; views that inadequate staff size would have a detrimental effect on the news; and more accounts of pressures from owners and top-level executives. Recall that influences within the media is represented by two measures, *direct* and *indirect newsroom management pressures*. Consequently, the nonsignificant relationship between the Extramedia and Within-Media Influences constructs merely suggests that forces outside the media do not have a notable direct influence on *newsroom managers*, within the scope of the current study.

A likely explanation for the lack of a direct relationship between the two aforementioned constructs stems from the fact that influences and actions from the reporters themselves were not considered as a measure for pressures within the media organization. Including such a measure might have allowed for a direct relationship; however, it was not included in this project for sound reasons. Since the survey contained somewhat sensitive

162

information regarding the profession and the industry, this study went to great lengths to obtain candid responses with which to assess influences and outcomes on content. Reporters were specifically chosen, as opposed to news directors, because they were viewed as more likely to give candid responses since they are further removed from the business side of news operations. Moreover, reporters' transient nature was expected to increase the likelihood that they would not cater their answers to protect the views of their current news organization, which were likely to seep into their perceptions of the industry as a whole. Asking sensitive information concerning their fellow frontline journalists—not simply about advertisers, owners and top-level executives, newsroom managers, or "TV stations in general"—had the potential to offend these respondents and, in turn, alter their answers to the survey questions. Therefore, asking these questions was not worth the risk—at least for this project, as it was partially used to build a strong base on which to build future studies. Future research, however, should consider including this measure to determine if it has a significant direct effect on the relationship between Extramedia and Within-Media Influences.

Anecdotal evidence and scholarly literature support both the Extramedia Influences level's indirect relationship with influences within the new organization (Within-Media), as well as its direct link with pressures at the Organizational level. A recap and further discussion of the direct link between Extramedia and Organizationl Influences, which was originally represented as a simple covariance, is provided in the subsection that follows.

The Relationship between Extramedia and Organizational Influences

For the current study, Organizational Influences was represented by three measures: *economic*, *owner/executive*, and *staff size pressures*. Initially, the hypothesized model proposed that there would simply be some kind of relationship between the Extramedia and

Organizational Influences constructs—that the two constructs would covary (Refer to Figure 2.3). In other words, more instances of pressures from forces outside the media would correspond with more pressures from organizational sources, and vice versa. As discussed, exploratory model testing suggested a stronger relationship indicating a *direct* relationship from influences at the Extramedia level to increased pressures at the Organizational level, rather than a simple covariance. This change was incorporated based on the computer output during the exploratory phase, as well as the logical assumption that increases in the amount of Extramedia Influences (*advertiser*, *public relations*, and *political pressures*) would lead to greater levels of Organizational influences—increased perceptions of economic pressures; views that inadequate staff size would have a detrimental effect on the news; and more accounts of pressures from owners and top-level executives.[325] The direct connection between the two constructs is, perhaps, best explained by discussing the relationship in terms of the constructs' respective measures.

As mentioned, for the purposes of this study, Extramedia Influences was measured by *advertiser, public relations*, and *political/government official pressures*, and Organizational Influences was represented by *owner/top-level executive, economic,* and *staff size pressures*. The finding that the Extramedia Influences construct has a direct effect on those pressures at the Organizational level is a logical one, and it is especially evident when the relationship is delineated with regard to the constructs' measures. One rationalization involves *economic pressure,* a measure of Organizational Influences. Reporters' perceptions of more pressures from Extramedia Influences correspond with perceptions of more *economic pressure*. For

---

[325]Furthermore, since the Extramedia Influences construct changed from and exogenous to an endogenous variable with the location change of Market Size within the model, a direct path (rather than a covariance) was required to execute the analysis in AMOS.

example, pressures from advertisers likely lead to more instances of financial and economic pressures, based on reporters' perceptions. Furthermore, reporters who perceive more instances of Extramedia Influences also seem to identify more detrimental effects resulting from reduced or inadequate staff size (*staff size pressure*). For instance, respondents who report more instances of *PR* and *political pressures,* both measures of Extramedia Influences*,* also appear to view inadequate staff size as being a negative for news organizations. In other words, this explanation indicates a positive relationship because more instances of Extramedia pressures lead to more reporters agreeing that reduced or an inadequate staff size is a negative characteristic for stations. This reasoning falls in line with previous research that suggests that a smaller staff size typically corresponds with using more information subsidies, which are generally provided by public relations practitioners and public affairs offices for government officials.[326] In addition to logical reasoning that supports the stronger direct link, evidence in the literature also helps to validate this finding.

Top media executives are often board members of other major companies on which their news organizations rely for advertising. Therefore, they are likely subjected to a certain amount of pressure, especially if their news organization is running a controversial story about these other institutions of which they are members. As a result of these pressures, the executive might exert his or her authoritative power down the ranks to kill the story. Shoemaker and Reese offer an example of a related incident at ABC News where a reporting team uncovered "scandalous conditions at nursing homes owned by Charles Wick, a friend of

---

[326]For example, see Sallot and Johnson, "Investigating Relationships Between Journalists and Public Relations Practitioners," 156; Turk, "Information Subsidies and Influence;" Turk, "Information Subsidies and Media Content;" and Gandy, "Information Subsidies."

President Reagan."[327] Ultimately the story did not air because the producers were told it was not newsworthy.   It appears, although not clearly proved in this case, that forces outside news organizations can influence executive decision-making and, therefore, influence media content. This particular example provides anecdotal support for the direct relationship between forces at the Extramedia and Organizational levels, as well as the more elaborate connection between all constructs/sources of influence in the model (i.e., Extramedia→Organizational→Within-Media→Content Influence/Outcome).

Another example, this time involving NBC, provides relative support for the finding that forces outside the media affect those at the Organizational level. During the opening ceremony of the 1996 Olympics, NBC's Bob Costas referred to U.S.-China tensions, including China's "problems with human rights" and "property rights disputes."[328] China's governmental officials and state-run news media voiced their displeasure for the remarks, and NBC promptly issued an apology. The news organization is owned by General Electric Company, which, according to a *New York Times* article, is "one of the largest foreign industrial enterprises in China, with hundreds of millions of dollars invested in areas such as lighting, plastics and medical equipment." [329] When an NBC Sports vice president was questioned about these corporate interests and their involvement in the decision to issue the apology, he claimed that they were not considered, "not as far as I was concerned."[330] This example provides at least some tangential support for the finding that forces outside the

---

[327]Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message*.

[328]"NBC Apologizes to China," *New York Times*, 23 August 1996, 8 (B).

[329]Ibid.

[330]Ibid.

media—in this cases political/governmental officials—may have a direct affect on those at the Organizational level—here, owners and top-level executives.

In summary, although a covariance relationship was originally proposed and supported, face validity and exploratory model testing confirmed an even stronger *direct* relationship between the Extramedia and Organizational Influences constructs, thus providing both an improved explanation of the overall model and a better foundation with which to build future research. Future research should further examine this relationship, as well as a possible inverse relationship between the two; that is, the possibility that Organizational Influences may also directly affect forces at the Extramedia level. This potential relationship and more detailed suggestions for it role in future studies is outlined in the "Strengths and Limitations" section that is presented later in this chapter.

The Relationship between Organizational and Within-Media Influences

As previously discussed, the hypothesized IOMC model proposed that Organizational Influences would have a direct influence on sources of influences within the media organization. Model testing confirmed this relationship, suggesting that the greater instances of pressures at the Organizational level lead to increased amounts of influence at the Within-Media level, which is measured by *direct* and *indirect pressures from newsroom management*.

This finding provides evidence for the argument that forces at the Organizational level—*owner/executive*, *economic*, and opinions on *staff size pressures*—exhibit a direct influence over sources of influence within the news organization (newsroom managers). Thus, the significant link supports prior contentions long held by media critics such as Ben Bagdikian and Robert McChesney that media owners have an influence on news

167

organizations and, in turn, media content.[331]   Likewise, it provides further credence to

Shoemaker and Reese's claim that "media owners have an unmistakable impact on media

content because they [establish] policy for the entire organization."[332]   McManus also alluded

to the relationship between the Organizational and Within-Media levels. He contended that

"management has a legal responsibility to serve the economic interest of owners;" therefore,

newsroom managers may exert pressure on journalist to uphold these interests. The direct

relationship also falls in line with previous research suggesting that the financial interests of

owners can affect the amount of news coverage, as well as the tone of both hard-news

coverage[333] and editorials.[334]

Although *owner and executive pressure* is just one measure of influence at the

Organizational level, other literature dealing with reporters' perceptions of *economic*

pressure, another measure, further substantiates the direct link between the Organizational

and Within-Media Influences constructs. For example, McManus called attention to

economic pressures in his explanation of market-driven journalism, in which he remarked

that media organizations are a part of a "market-based economy" competing in four different

markets—investors, advertisers, sources of news, and consumers.[335]   He argued that these

---

[331]For example, see Robert W. McChesney, *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Ben H. Bagdikian, *The Media Monopoly*, 5th ed. (Boston: Beacon, 1997); Ben H. Bagdikian, *The Media Monopoly*, 3d ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990).

[332]Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message*, 137.

[333]For example, see Gilens and Hertzman, "Corporate Ownership and News Bias," 374, 383; Colistra, "Out of Sight, Out of Mind: Agenda Cutting in the Mass Media."

[334]For example, see Gilens and Hertzman, "Corporate Ownership and News Bias," 374, 383; Colistra, "Coverage and Editorial Framing of the FCC's 2003 Review of Media Ownership Rules;" Snider and Page, "Does Media Ownership Affect Media Stands?," as cited in Mark Cooper, *Media Ownership and Democracy in the Digital Information Age*, 48.

[335]McManus, *Market-Driven Journalism*, 26-27, 32.

investors, or owners, are the most influential in the production of news because they are a part of the corporate structure, while the other three markets must externally exert their influence. Since the investors appear to have the strongest influence in media organizations, according to McManus' model, news workers, including newsroom managers within the news organization itself, may feel economic and bottom-line pressures from these owners or from the top-level executives who are relaying the messages. Thus, McManus' argument provides further validation for the direct link between the Organizational and Within-Media constructs, suggesting that the more instances of pressures at the Organizational level lead to greater pressures and influences within the media organization.

In addition to examining direct link just discussed, future researchers could expand on this finding to include a measure of ownership concentration at the Organizational level, as well as additional measures of influences within the media organization itself, such as reporters or newsroom policy. As discussed, the present study initially proposed an ownership concentration index as one indicator of Organizational Influences; however, it exhibited a low reliability with regard to the other variables, which, coupled with its status as an untested measure, warranted its omission. Future studies could work to refine the measure and its placement within the model. Testing additional measures would only serve to further elucidate our current understanding of influences at the Organizational and Within-Media levels.

The Relationship between Within-Media Influences and Overall Content Influence

As indicated in the IOMC model, Within-Media Influences was the main mediator of the IOMC model (See Figure 4.5). More simply put, it was the construct that all other influences in the model passed through before reaching Influences and Outcomes on Content

and Coverage Decisions, the main dependent variable of the study. A central implication for the study is that higher levels of Extramedia and Organizational pressures have a significant influence, whether direct or indirect, on forces within the news organization (Within-Media). The IOMC model also suggests that these Within-Media Influences are then directly related to reporters' perceptions of Influences on News Content and Coverage Decisions, which is measured by the level of (1) *agenda building*; (2) *frame building*; and (3) *agenda cutting*. That is, more reports of influences and pressures within the media organization lead to more instances of influences on news content, based on reporters' perceptions.

From a professional perspective, this finding could serve as the starting point for creating innovative newsroom policy and guidelines of how to deal with such situations of attempted influence when they arise. At the very least, implications from this portion of the IOMC model could provide a basis on which to facilitate newsroom dialogue about these issues. Potential influences on news workers have brought newsroom ethics to the front line of debates, especially with regard to how news content is affected. Since news people are continually faced with competing loyalties (e.g., to readers/viewers, managers, advertisers, and stockholders, to name a few), they potentially deal with such issues on a regular basis. Therefore, these discussions are especially important today with even more concern over the bottom line, which seems particularly pronounced in the television industry.[336] From another professional standpoint, the finding should be of use to those making management hiring decisions for news organizations. Since, as the results show, newsroom managers have a direct influence on news content and coverage decisions, they should exercise this influence with the public interest in mind. Therefore, the study illuminates the need to assess and hire

---

[336]Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message*, 2d ed., 267.

potential management candidates based on journalistic training, previous journalistic experience, and their track record with regard to running a newsroom and, perhaps, abiding by journalistic ethical standards. In turn, the managers might be less likely to bow to unfavorable pressures from forces at the Extramedia and Organizational levels.[337]

The role of the ombudsman or public editor might also be considered. Instead of sources of attempted influences going straight to newsroom management or reporters, these media "mediators" may be experiencing the brunt of these pressures. Future research should consider people serving in this position as possible sources of qualitative information on the subject of influences and outcomes on news content. Furthermore, the role of the ombudsman is also important to investigate, as they can also use their position to inform the public about the means by which their respective newsrooms deal with attempted pressures from forces such as advertisers, owners, and government officials. Doing so could help news organizations rebuild and maintain trust with the public and possibly attract more readers and viewers.

The finding also offers important implications with regard to media theory, explicitly concerning its relevance to Social Control of the Newsroom studies. As discussed, Within-Media Influences was measured by *direct* and *indirect management pressures*. Briefly, *direct management pressures* were assessed through survey questions asking reporters how often they believed newsroom managers/superiors within a TV station provide clear

---

[337]The term "unfavorable" is used here because not all pressures to run content are necessarily harmful attempts at slanting the news. For example, information from a public relations professional working for a nonprofit could be useful for both the news outlet and the nonprofit organization. The PR practitioner provides information about a particular service by the organization, and the news outlet could then relay this useful information to its audience. Therefore, all parties benefit from this exchange of information. That is, the nonprofit succeeds because information about its services are relayed to a potentially needy audience, and the news outlet is benefited because it fills a spot in its news hole by providing important information to its viewers/readers.

171

instructions or directly tell reporters what to cover, how to cover it, or what *not* to cover. *Indirect management pressures*, on the other hand, involve suggesting particular story topics or angles through more subtle means, such as yawning at or making fun of a story idea, or showing disinterest by not airing a reporters' story. According to Breed's argument, if these actions are repeated over time, journalists learn, or become socialized, to cover (or not cover) a story in the manner suggested by their superiors, but they do so at their own discretion. In fact, one staff member in Breed's classic 1955 study noted that news workers learned what to cover "by osmosis."[338] Although Breed observed that the hidden norms and routines (the *indirect* form of management pressures) seem to be the more powerful force in the newsroom, they are not afforded as much attention in scholarship as *direct* means of communicating. This inattention is likely due to the difficulty in defining, measuring, and analyzing these covert influence signals. The current study, however, provides both the measures and results by which to better elucidate this important area of newsroom culture. Although the present study examines these direct and indirect forms of control through the larger lens of an overall model of content influences and outcomes, it provides a rich source of information for future studies examining this particular area in more detail. Specifically, the information and results gathered in the study have the potential to make a significant contribution to media scholarship by providing a much-needed update of the prior "Social Control of the Newsroom" studies, particularly with regard to the *indirect*, or hidden, areas of socialization.

---

[338]Breed, "Social Control in the Newsroom," 328.

The Link between Organizational Influences and Overall Content Influences

Originally, the hypothesized model posited that influences at the Organizational level were only expected to affect reporters' perceptions of influences on content indirectly; that is, after "filtering through" influences within the media organization (Within-Media Influences). This notion, however, was reconsidered, in part because the s*taff size pressure* measure was re-classified as an Organizational, rather than Within-Media, indicator because it exhibited a stronger association with the Organizational Influences factor. As mentioned, previous literature supported this new categorization.[339] After reconsideration, it seemed logical that each of the measures (*economic pressures*, *pressures from owners and top-level executives*, and *staff size pressures*) could *directly* affect reporters' perceptions of content influences. Specifically, it was proposed that Organizational Influences could not only *indirectly* affect content by first influencing newsroom managers within the media organization, but they could also affect reporters' perceptions of influences on content *directly*. Although it was not specifically suggested in the analysis output, the modification makes sound theoretical and logical sense. For example, reporters may feel that station workers could easily avoid covering a particular story because of an inadequate staff size (staff size pressure), or because it may offend a company with economic clout over their station (economic pressure) or the station manager (owner/executive pressure). In other words, news workers do not necessarily have to wait for their news directors to tell them to do so. Instead, they may feel the pressure themselves and act accordingly. Simply put, they may have been socialized to accept that responsibility and self-edit.

---

[339]For example, see Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message* 2d ed., 139-173; Fico and Cote, "Partisan and Structural Balance of Election Stories on the 1998 Governor's Race in Michigan," 165-182.

Previous survey results provide additional support for the direct relationship. For example, a 2000 survey by Pew Research Center found that 42% of local journalists and 25% of those working for national stations believed that journalists sometimes purposely avoid covering certain stories that they believe are truly newsworthy.[340] Of those respondents, an average of 21% (16% national and 26% local) answered that these journalists typically decide to avoid these stories on their own; that is, without basing their decision on (a) how they believe their bosses would respond; (b) signals from their bosses; or (c) some other reason. In particular, these two survey questions inadvertently concern one of the Content Influence/Outcome measures of the present study: the *level of agenda cutting*. Still, the Pew survey responses have broader implications, indicating that news workers do not necessarily wait for their newsroom managers/superiors to tell them to cover or emphasize a particular topic; cover it from a particular angle; or avoid covering a topic altogether.

In the same survey, journalists were also asked their opinions as to what extent corporate owners influence news organizations' decisions about which stories to cover or emphasize. Notice the question deals with one of the Organizational Influence measures considered in the current study (i.e., owner pressures), as well as one of the Content Influence/Outcome indicators (i.e., agenda building). One-third of the national journalists and half of the local journalists surveyed reported that corporate owners influence news outlets' decisions of the stories to cover or emphasize "a great deal" or "a fair amount." Thus, these results provide additional backing for the direct link between the Organizational and Content Influence/Outcome constructs, as influences from newsroom managers within the organization are not considered. One final illustration from the same Pew Research Center survey offers added validation for the direct link. Respondents were provided a series

---

[340]"Self Censorship: How Often and Why,"

of reasons for purposely avoiding truly newsworthy stories, and they were asked how often

they thought journalists they know avoid stories based on the reasons given. Forty-four

percent of the journalists working for local stations said that journalists they know would

commonly or *sometimes* avoid stories if it would be embarrassing or damaging to the

financial interests of a news organization's owners or parent company.[341] Furthermore, more

than one-third of the local journalists reported that journalists they know would *commonly* or

sometimes avoid stories that would be embarrassing or damaging to friends or associates of a

news organization's owners. These particular questions involve two measures of

Organizational Influences that were used in the current study (i.e., economic pressures and

pressures concerning owners), and they also assess how journalists would make coverage

decisions on their own accord; that is, without direction from newsroom superiors. Thus,

these Pew survey results also provide some related support for the Organizational Influences'

direct relationship with news organizations' Influences on News Content and Coverage

Decisions.

Implications of the Construct and Parameter Estimates

In addition to testing the overall model, this study also assessed relationships among

variables that were not directly specified in the first phase of the study. This section provides

a discussion regarding the professional, academic, and theoretical implications of the

findings that resulted from the analyses used to evaluate the study's hypotheses and research

questions. Specifically, the results from examining *staff size pressures* and both *public

relations pressures* and Overall Influences on News Content, both alone and controlling for

Market Size, are discussed. Additionally, the implications from the separate analyses

---

[341]The wording in the actual survey is "commonplace" rather than "commonly."

175

involving Market Size in relation to *advertiser*, *public relations*, and *political pressures*, as well as to its correlation with Overall Influences on Content and Coverage Decisions are further explained. Finally, inferences are provided based on the results regarding the incremental strength of the Extramedia and Organizational Influences and the assessments to determine the strongest predictor of the Overall Influence on News Content construct and *instances of agenda cutting* measure.

Staff Size Pressures and it Relationship with Pressures from Public Relations Practitioners and Overall Content Influences

The first two hypotheses in this second stage of the study concerned *staff size pressure*, which was measured by two survey questions assessing reporters' opinions of an inadequate or reduced staff size and its effects on news coverage. That is, the measure does not represent the staffing situations at the respondents' station. The indicator was not represented in this manner because reporters were asked about pressures and influences at TV stations *in general*, not necessarily at their particular station. As discussed, this method was used, among other reasons, to elicit more candid responses and, in turn, a more accurate depiction of the influence and outcome processes in the television industry.

As predicted, *staff size pressures* was positively correlated with both *public relations pressures* and Overall Influences on News Content and Coverage Decisions, the latter being the main dependent variable of the larger study. Regarding the first relationship, this finding suggests that those who believe that an inadequate or reduced staff size has negative effects on coverage and/or quality also reported more instances of pressures from public relations practitioners. This reasoning falls in line with previous research suggesting that a smaller staff size typically corresponds with using more information subsidies, which are generally

176

provided by public relations practitioners and public affairs offices for government

officials.[342] More specifically, public relations and agenda-building research suggests that if

a news organization has an inadequate staff to fill the day's news hole, a station may rely on

outside sources, such as information subsidies from public relations practitioners, to

compensate for this lack of "man power."[343] Although this finding has been observed in

previous research, it has not been evaluated from the perspective of the current study, which

measures staff size pressures by assessing reporters' opinions regarding inadequate staff size

and its effects on coverage. From another viewpoint, although reporters may sometimes

frown upon PR practitioners' pressures to run their information, they may also have no

choice but to air these provided pieces because they simply may not have the means to fill

the news space themselves due to reduced or inadequate staff at their stations.

As previously discussed, the second hypothesis predicted a positive relationship

between *staff size pressures* and Overall Influence on News Content and Coverage decisions.

In support of the hypothesis, the finding suggests that reporters who perceive an inadequate

or reduced staff size as hurting the quality of and/or negatively affecting coverage also report

more overall instances of influences on television media content. This finding is logical

because those reporters who perceive more instances of influences on news content also view

inadequate staffing at a station as a negative in terms of the quality of news coverage. This

may be because stations with inadequate or reduced staff situation could be more susceptible

to influences from forces both within and outside the news organization. Existing literature

---

[342]For example, see Turk, "Information Subsidies and Influence;" Turk, "Information Subsidies and Media Content;" and Gandy, "Information Subsidies;" McManus, *Market-Driven Journalism.*

[343]For example, see Turk, "Information Subsidies and Influence;" Turk, "Information Subsidies and Media Content;" and Gandy, "Information Subsidies."

provides some tangential support for this finding. For example, Lacy, Fico, and Simon found

that staff size was positively correlated with performance in the newspaper industry.[344] In

other words, larger staff size corresponds with better the news performance, which typically

means little to no influence on news content from outside sources. Other research has also

supported a link between staff size and news quality or overall industry performance.[345]

From a journalistic standpoint, this finding is important because it provides some

evidence that increased instances of pressure from public relations practitioners correspond

with reporters viewing a reduced or inadequate staff size as a negative characteristic for TV

stations. Managers could use this information to address news workers' concerns and,

perhaps, establish and/or revise policies and procedures for using information provided by

PR professionals. When doing so, clarification of what constitutes as "use" of these public

relations materials is also important, as Curtin found that one editor in her study denied using

press releases only to later admit that these items were used for sparking a story idea.[346]

Furthermore, managers could take the current results into consideration when faced with

potential staffing cuts from higher-level executives to help them argue on the side of keeping

a larger staff, not only to potentially improve news quality but possibly employee morale as

well. Public relations professionals could also use this information to work to further

improve relationships with media professionals. Finally, these findings also have theoretical

implications because they provide further insight into a much-examined area of agenda-

building scholarship—public relations and information subsidies—with regard to, perhaps, a

---

[344]Lacy, Fico, and Simon, "Relationship among Economic, Newsroom, and Content Variables."

[345]For example, see Sooyoung Cho, Esther Thorson, and Stephen Lacy, "Increased Circulation Follows Investments in Newsroom," *Newspaper Research Journal* 25, no. 4 (fall 2004): 36; Busterna, "Television Station Ownership Effects on Programming and Idea Diversity"; Lacy, Fico, and Simon, "Relationship among Economic, Newsroom, and Content Variables."

[346] Curtin, "*Reevaluating Public Relations Information Subsidies,*" 64.

more complex relationship between news workers and PR professionals. That is, more complex, but less-researched, in the sense that reporter opinions on staffing issues may be the result of them fearing for their autonomy from outside sources providing this free news material, which they may sometimes need to fill their time slots. Furthermore, it provides additional information with regard to theoretical approaches concerning influences on news media content.

Future research in this area might continue to assess *opinions* regarding staff size, opposed to *size* of the staff itself, to offer more support for findings in the present study. Since this project used only two questions to assess reporters' opinions on this important matter, future scholars should add more measures to provide a deeper look into how news workers view staffing cuts and how it affects their ability to properly perform their job functions. As noted earlier, the effect sizes for the relationships were small, which *could* be an indication that the significance levels were an effect of the larger sample size. Previous research, however, supports the findings in the current study. The fact that the sample was more representative of reporters from larger markets could also be a factor in the small coefficients, as these respondents likely have different views concerning the influences and outcomes under study. Future researchers should take note of the effect size when generalizing these findings, and they should further examine the relationships under different market situations to determine if the effect size increases in magnitude.

Assessing the Impact of Market Size

In addition to assessing the simple correlations between *staff size pressures* and both *public relations pressures* and Overall Influences on News Content, this study also examined these relationships while holding the size of the respondents' market constant; that is,

179

controlling for Market Size. The further examination of these relationships was important

given that previous research has suggested that smaller-market media may be more

susceptible to external pressures, which can, in turn, affect news coverage decisions.[347]

Although the initially proposed model in phase one of the study included Market Size as a

control variable, the aforementioned hypotheses did not. Therefore, it was necessary to

evaluate the relationships from this perspective in order to more accurately describe their

implications. This evaluation was especially important given the later realization that the

study's sample more heavily represented reporters working in the larger DMAs.

Results showed that controlling for Market Size had no effect on the relationship

between *staff size pressures* and *pressures from public relations professionals*, as the

correlation coefficient remained unchanged. It did, however, slightly intensify the magnitude

of the relationship between reporters' perceptions of *staff size pressures* and their perceptions

of Influences on News Content and Coverage Decisions. Still, since both correlations

remained significant, the findings confirm that there are significant relationships between the

variables beyond what might be accounted for by Market Size. These findings suggest that

the size of the respondents' markets has no significant effect on their perceptions of pressures

regarding staff size, public relations pressures, and overall influences on content. The

diminutive increase in effect size (one hundredth of one percent) for the relationship between

staff size pressures and Influences on Content is likely due to the fact that the sample was

more representative of reporters from larger markets. The fact that Market Size did little to

affect the strength of the aforementioned relationships, and nothing to affect their

---

[347]For example see, McManus, *Market-Driven Journalism*; Soley and Craig, "Advertising Pressures on Newspapers"; Hays and Reisner, "Feeling the Heat from Advertisers;" An Bergen, "Advertiser Pressure on Daily Newspapers."

significance, provides as least some evidence that the skewness of the sample in terms of reporter DMA did not likely affect the relationships explained in the overall IOMC model in phase one of the study.

Besides assessing Market Size as a control variable, this study also examined the variable with regard to its relationship with reporters' perceptions of (a) overall influences/effects on news content and coverage decisions; (b) pressures from advertisers; (c) political/government official pressures; and (d) pressures from public relations practitioners. Based on existing literature, the present research predicted that Market Size would have a negative relationship with overall content influences, advertiser pressures, and public relations pressures, and a positive correlation with instances of pressures from politicians and government officials, based on reporters' perceptions.

All but one of the hypothesized relationships was confirmed: the negative correlation between *public relations pressures* and Market Size. In fact, these two variables were shown to be unrelated, which indicates that smaller-market media workers are not necessarily subjected to more instances of pressures from public relations practitioners than their larger-market brethren. This finding is peripherally supported by Cameron and Blount's research that found that smaller stations did not use VNRs more than those in larger markets,[348] as well as by Harmon and White's study that suggested that *all* sizes of markets were likely to use VNRs.[349]

---

[348]Glen T. Cameron and David Blount, "VNRs and Air Checks: A Content Analysis of the Use of Video News Releases in Television Newscasts," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 73, no. 4 (winter 1996): 890-904.

[349]Mark D. Harmon and Candace White, "How Television News Programs Use Video News Releases," *Public Relations Review* 27 (2001): 213-222.

Overall, the findings suggest that reporters from smaller-market stations perceived more instances of Influences on Content than reporters from larger DMAs. Furthermore, the results indicate that news workers at smaller-market stations may be more susceptible to pressures from advertisers than those in larger markets. Conversely, as expected, television stations in larger markets are more likely to experience pressures from politicians and/or government officials than those in smaller market areas.

It is important to point out the small effect sizes of the aforementioned correlations, which might indicate that the significant relationships found among the variables *may* be attributed to the larger sample size. The fact that the sample was more heavily representative of reporters from larger media markets may also explain these smaller coefficients. It is expected that the effect sizes would likely be higher if the sample was a closer representation of the population. Therefore, future studies might expect stronger, significant effects if more smaller-market media are included. As explained in more detail in the "Strengths and Limitations" section of this chapter, obtaining a closer representation of the population was not possible for the current study since such a large number of cases were required for the analysis.

To elucidate on the broader implications of these findings, the discussion briefly reverts to the validated model in phase one, where Market Size was found to have a significant, direct negative relationship with influences at the Extramedia level (Refer to Figure 4.5). Given the findings in phase two of the study—which found that Market Size had a negative correlation with advertiser pressures; a positive correlation with political pressures; and no relationship with PR pressure—it appears that the direct negative relationship between Market Size and the Extramedia Influences in the IOMC model is likely

due to the stronger negative relationship between Market Size and Advertisers Pressures, which was detected in phase two. This assumption especially seems valid since the only other significant Extramedia measure in terms of Market Size was a *positive* correlation with political pressures. This deeper examination of both stages of the study potentially suggests that Market Size may not have as strong an influence on the overall process of influences and outcomes in the television industry as suggested by previous research. A more likely explanation, however, deals with the fact that the sample more strongly represented reporters working in larger media markets. It is expected that the relationships presented in this study dealing with Market Size would be stronger if more reporters from the smaller DMAs were included. To be sure, however, more research is required, such as testing the validated model in a future study using new data and running the analysis both with and without the Market Size variable, as well as with more representation of journalists working in medium and smaller media markets. Still, this finding offers strong potential for media economics researchers, especially those interested in the influences of market size on the creation of news content. The suggestions made from this closer look at the full study also have strong implications for professionals working outside the media with regard to the conditions under which their communication efforts are more likely to be effective.

Assessment of the Extramedia and Organizational Influence Measures to Determine the Strongest Predictors of Overall Content Influences and Agenda Cutting Occurrences

The final four research questions and hypotheses in stage two of the study gauged the incremental strength of the extramedia (*advertiser*, *public relations*, and *political pressures*) and organizational (*staff*, *economic*, and *owner/executive pressures*) influences measures to determine the strongest predictor of both the Overall Influence on News Content and, in

particular, *instances of agenda cutting*. The assessments of the Extramedia Influence

measures are first discussed.

Incremental Strength of the Extramedia Measures

The IOMC model examined how Extramedia Influences interrelates with other

constructs to influence news content, based on reporters' perceptions. In this phase of the

study, Extramedia Influences were examined together; that is, as an overall construct.

Although this assessment provided valuable information in terms of the overall model, the

relative contribution of each extramedia measure (i.e., advertiser, public relations, and

political pressures) also warranted further investigation to better delineate how forces outside

the media attempt to, and succeed at, influencing content. Perhaps more significant,

however, was the evaluation of these measures with regard to the content influence measure

of *agenda cutting*. Since this phenomenon has been afforded little attention by academics

and professionals alike, explaining its function with regard to these apparent sources of

influence had the potential to help develop this concept as a vital area of both business and

media scholarship.

As predicted, TV reporters' perceptions of *advertiser pressures* had the greatest

influence on news content and coverage decisions. *Public relations pressure* was the second

strongest extramedia predictor of content influences, while *pressures from political and*

governmental officials exhibited the least amount of influence.

It is important to point out that although *political pressures* did little to influence

content within the scope of the current study, it was included in the overall regression model

because of its contribution in conjunction with the other measures. One probable reason for

its small effect is that professionals representing politicians and government officials often

184

use the same communication tactics as public relations practitioners (e.g., news releases, advisories, story pitches). Although the researcher attempted to distinguish between the two sources, it is still possible that the respondents could have mistaken pressures from public information officers (PIOs) working for politicians with public relations practitioners. Furthermore, since these professional use many of the same communications strategies, it is oftentimes difficult for a busy journalist to distinguish between the two. Therefore, examining the separate entities for research purposes may be rather difficult and the results somewhat muddled. Remedying this situation may be more challenging than one might think, especially since these professional do not necessarily call journalists at the station stating "I work for a government official" or "I am the public relations contact for…." The answer may lie within the examination of actual communications tactics received by the stations in order to identify their originator (e.g., a PR professional representing a nonprofit, or a PIO representing an official in local government). To gauge types of pressure other than actual communications tactics, a researcher could ask journalists to record the sources of their phone calls (i.e., the types of companies or offices calling them) when these organizations or offices contact them to garner media attention or to provide off-the-record information.

As mentioned, the results of this examination indicate that advertisers have the largest amount of influence on news content and coverage decisions in the television industry, based on reporters' perceptions. This finding provides additional support for existing literature regarding advertisers' influence on the media—especially Croteau and Hoynes' contention that advertisers have "substantial influence over what is and is not emphasized in the media."[350] It also offers some validation for Baker's claim that media organizations sell

---

[350]Croteau and Hoynes, *The Business of Media*, 179.

audiences to advertisers, rather than news products to audiences.[351] He has argued that managers are faced with multiple loyalties in today's competitive media market, and that favor usually goes toward the larger purchaser; the purchaser with the most knowledge as to how the media can serve its needs; and the purchaser most sensitive to how the media can affect its interests. In other words, the advertisers are favored.

This study's findings indicate that public relations practitioners also have some success in influencing coverage, but at smaller level than advertisers. Despite the smaller influence of political pressures, it contributed to the overall interaction between the three extramedia variables to provide a better explanation of content influences, within the scope of the current study. Therefore, it was retained for the overall explanation.

As previously discussed, stage two of the study also provided an examination of the incremental strength of the Extramedia Influence measures with regard to their effect on a specific type of influence on news content: *instances of agenda cutting*. Briefly, agenda cutting may occur when an item is (1) placed low on the news agenda (buried); (2) removed from the agenda once it is there; or (3) ignored because it was never put on the news agenda in the first place. Since the present study serves as the first attempt to develop and expand this concept as a theoretical approach, the most obvious form of agenda cutting—ignoring, or not covering, a story or topic—was assessed in the survey.

The findings suggest that agenda cutting does indeed exist, and the extramedia measures, particularly pressures from advertisers, exhibit an even stronger influence than on the Overall Influences on Content construct. The results reveal a similar pattern as the previous analysis of the extramedia measures and Overall Content Influences.

---

[351]Baker, *Media, Markets, and Democracy,* 14.

As hypothesized, *advertiser pressures* was the strongest extramedia predictor of *instances of agenda cutting*. This finding is not surprising given the abundance of empirical and anecdotal evidence that concerns advertisers pulling ads from publications and TV stations because of content.[352] *Pressures from public relations practitioners* was the second greatest influence, while *political and government official pressures* made virtually no contribution to explaining *agenda-cutting occurrences.* Unlike the previous analysis, however, *political pressures* was excluded from the final regression model because it did not make a significant contribution, neither alone nor in conjunction with the other extramedia measures. Although this measure did little to predict and explain instances of agenda cutting in the current study, it should not necessarily be discounted as a possible source of influence in future research. The reasons that were offered for its small contribution in the previous analysis regarding Overall Content Influences also apply here. Moreover, the contribution reporters' perceptions of political pressures with regard to the other two extramedia measures may simply boil down to a matter of business versus politics. Reporters may perceive more instances of business-types of pressures, such as those from advertisers and public relations practitioners, because they are the usual suspects—and scapegoats—for such attempted influences on content. Political influences, however, are a different story, as journalists are repeatedly trained in journalism schools that those in government and political arenas should not be permitted to influence the news. Therefore, reporters may be less likely to recognize such sources of more subtle influences if and when they occur. Since agenda cutting is a little-studied phenomenon, its development would likely benefit from further examination of

---

[352]For example, see Croteau and Hoynes, *The Business of Media: Corporate Media and the Public Interest*, 180; Steinem, "Sex, Lies & Advertising," 18; Masterson, "Many Editors Report Advertiser Pressure: Most Have Had Ads Pulled Due to Stories," 22; Platt, "Angry Dealers Pull TV Ads."

the *political pressures* measure, as well as the other extramedia indicators considered in the present study. Future research regarding Overall Influences on News Content and Coverage decisions would benefit from further exploration the extramedia measures as well.

Incremental Strength of the Organizational Measures

In addition to assessing the extramedia measures, this study also examined the relative contribution of each of the organizational measures (i.e., owner/executive, economic, and staff size pressures) with regard to Overall Influences on News Content and Coverage Decisions and *instances of agenda cutting.*

As hypothesized, pressures from *owners and top-level executives* had the greatest influence on news content and coverage decisions, based on reporters' perceptions. *Economic pressure* was the second strongest organizational predictor of content influences, while *pressures regarding staff size* showed the least amount of influence. The overall findings suggest that as reporters perceive more instances of bottom-line, economic pressures, as well as pressures coming from owners and top-level executives, the more they perceive these sources as having an influence on content and coverage decisions. This relationship is especially apparent with owners/top-level executives, as this source of influence is the strongest predictor in the model. Although a recent study by Pew Research Center in March 2008 suggested that economic and business pressures are the top concern for the local and national journalists who were surveyed,[353] the present study suggests that pressures from owners and top-level executives are a powerful force—particularly with regard to influences on news content. Evidence in separate studies by Shoemaker and

---

[353]"Financial Woes Now Overshadow All Other Concerns for Journalists," *The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press* (March 17, 2008), http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=403 (accessed on March 18, 2008).

Reese[354] and McManus,[355]among others, provide support for this finding that owners and top-level executives can be strong influencers when it comes to news coverage decisions.

Although *staff size pressure* also exhibits an influence on reporters' perceptions of Content and Coverage Decisions, the variation that it explains is achieved in combination with the other two measures. Furthermore, it provides virtually no unique contribution in explaining influences on news content. As a result, this organizational measure was excluded from the most parsimonious regression model. The staff pressure measure, however, should not necessarily be discounted as a predictor of content influences. Future researchers could continue to assess *opinions* regarding staff size, as well as the *actual size* of the staff to provide additional information on this measure's potential role in affecting Influences on Content Decisions. As discussed, the current project used only two questions to assess reporters' opinions regarding staff size issues. Future scholars should add more measures to provide a deeper look into how news workers view staffing situations in relation to the effect on news quality, content, and instances of agenda cutting, which is discussed in the paragraphs that follow.

In addition to assessing the Organizational Influence measures' effects on Overall Content Influences, the second stage of the study also examined these measures with regard to *instances of agenda cutting*. The findings show a similar pattern as the previous analysis of the organizational measures and influences on content, and they suggest that the measures more strongly influence reporters' perceptions of *agenda-cutting occurrences* than they did for Overall Content Influences.

---

[354]Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message*, 137.

[355]McManus, *Market-Driven Journalism*, 26-27, 32.

As predicted, *owner/executive pressure* was the strongest predictor of instances of agenda cutting, based on reporters' perceptions. *Economic pressures* was the second strongest organizational influence, and reporters' views of *staff size pressures* offered the least in terms of explaining instances of agenda cutting. Overall findings suggest that the more TV stations have to contend with economic and staff pressures, as well as pressures from owners and top-level executive, the more likely agenda-cutting effects on coverage decisions are likely to occur. Again, these findings are based upon reporters' perceptions of these influences and their effects on content—in this case, *not* covering a particular topic (agenda cutting). This relationship is especially apparent with owners/top-level executives, as this source of influence is the strongest predictor in the model. Although *staff size pressure* offered little in terms of explaining *instances of agenda cutting,* it was included in the overall regression model because of its significant unique contribution, as well as its contribution in conjunction with the other measures.

Even though existing literature offers at least some tangential support of *advertisers* influencing *instances of agenda cutting*, fewer examples have suggested how organizational measures contribute to this function. The present study, which is the first attempt at developing this phenomenon, strongly suggests that organizational pressures, particularly pressures from owner/executives and economic pressures, are major players where agenda cutting is concerned—perhaps even more so than extramedia forces. A side-by-side comparison of the two regression analyses concerning agenda cutting reveals that the strength of association is much higher for the organizational measures, as compared to measures of extramedia influences. Although this assumption is based on a rough "unofficial" assessment, future research could build a stronger argument by providing a more

190

formal comparison of the two influence levels pertaining to agenda cutting. To do so, the researcher could examine the measures that were validated in the present study using multiple regression to consider both the extramedia and organizational measures in the same analysis.

Strengths and Limitations

One of the most important contributions of the IOMC model and the current study is that it provides a higher-level, overall perspective of how forces both within and outside the media may attempt to, and succeed at, influencing news content and coverage decisions. This type of research is especially pertinent in the current media landscape where news workers are faced with multiple competing loyalties, which are at least partially due to increased economic constraints and bottom-line pressures. In the television industry, which was the current project's focus, news content and coverage decisions appear to be influenced by forces outside the media, those at the organizational level, and sources within the news organization itself. Market size also played a role in the overall model; however, it did not directly affect the level of influences on news content. Instead, it was more strongly related to reporters' perceptions of the amount of extramedia influences, which was measured by instances of *advertiser, public relations,* and *political/government official pressures*. The final validated model clarifies how all of the influence levels interrelate to eventually affect media content and coverage decisions. First, it suggests that forces outside the media (Extramedia Influences) directly affect influences at the Organizational level. These organizational forces, in turn, directly influence sources within the media organization (Within-Media Influences) and, finally, news content itself, based on reporters' perceptions. Forces at the Organizational level also exhibit a direct influence on content and coverage

decisions; that is, without first being mediated by (or filtering through) influences from newsroom managers, which are a source of measure at the Within-Media level. Findings from the final validation on the full data set (n=612) suggested that the IOMC model explained 90% of variance of the dependent variable, Influences on News Content and Coverage Decisions (See Figure 4.5).

Among the most important contributions of the study is its inclusion of and support for agenda cutting as a theoretical approach. Briefly, agenda cutting may occur when an item is (1) placed low on the news agenda (buried); (2) removed from the agenda once it is there; or (3) ignored because it was never put on the news agenda in the first place. The process is proposed to occur because of logistical constraints, external and internal influences, and/or journalists' own prejudices. The current research found that the process was most likely to occur because of external and internal influences (i.e., extramedia and organizational influences), and it also provides some support for occurrences due to logistical constraints (e.g., staff size pressures), albeit on a much smaller level.

As discussed, this study provides strong support for the existence of agenda cutting, as well as validation for its use as a theoretical approach in media scholarship and beyond. Inclusion of agenda cutting as a pertinent area of research only serves to deepen our understanding of influences and outcomes on content. Specifically, agenda cutting could be thought of as a branch of agenda building and agenda setting. It is important to point out, however, that it is not simply *the opposite of agenda setting*. Instead, it appears that the reasons for its occurrence are different and perhaps even more complex because the involved forces may have a different motives and intentions for keeping an item out of the news.

Examining agenda cutting from a media-effects perspective is also an important area

to consider for future researchers. If an item is not covered or is placed low on the news agenda, the public may be unaware of important societal issues. In turn, this cutting function may affect how people view and participate in their social structures; thus, future research should also examine the role audiences and how they are affected. Measuring audience effects on an issue that the researcher may not know is being cut at the time of study, however, presents a possible problem; that is, unless the researcher has a pre-designed survey on hand to be sent out with the cut topic inserted at last minute. As a result, the best way for audience effects to be assessed is likely through experimental research in which participants are presented with altered media products (e.g., print, Web, and broadcast) and then given a questionnaire with knowledge items.

Given the implications of the current project, the significance of agenda cutting cannot be stressed enough. This area shows promise for several areas, including the business sector, but it should be of particular interest to those studying advertising, public relations and strategic communication, media economics, media ownership, political communication, censorship, and propaganda.

Another notable implication of the model is that the influence process may be more linear than previously suggested by Shoemaker and Reese, at least within the scope of the present study. This claim is illustrated by the simple, non-divergent paths among most of the constructs in the model (Refer to Figure 4.5). The only relationship that breaks away from this linear process in the IOMC model is the direct link between the Organizational Influences and Content Influence/Outcome constructs. More simply put, this relationship was the only one in the model that did not travel down the chain of influences; that is, from Extramedia to Organizational to Within-Media and finally to Influence/Outcome on Content.

Future studies should further examine the process to determine whether these relationships hold true.

As discussed, Extramedia Influences was found to have a direct effect on influences at the Organizational level during model testing in phase one of the study. Future research should also examine if the inverse might also be true—Organizational Influences affecting influences at the Extramedia level. One hypothetical example of the relationship between the organizational and extramedia levels is media owners and executives' contributions to political campaigns. The owners/executives may contribute to the party and/or candidate that they believe would help them with their agenda (e.g., a policy agenda such as relaxation of ownership rules). In exchange, the candidate, if elected, would feel pressure to satisfy the needs of the media owners who contributed. On the other side, a political candidate could suggest that he or she would like the news organization to cover (or not cover) a certain issue. In return, that politician suggests that he or she will help the media organization with its goals or agendas. Although these hypothetical examples are just that, they provide a good illustration of how gatekeepers in the organizational and extramedia levels can influence each other. In other words, influences may be bilateral. In reality, the pressures that these two levels exert on one another are most likely not as direct.

In addition to the aforementioned hypothetical situation, previous research also provides some related support for examining this possible relationship in a future project. For example, Hasen stated his case in the *Texas Law Review* opposing the media exception to campaign finance laws, which provides support for the reciprocal relationship between the extramedia and organizational levels.[356] In one part of the argument, he used a public

---

[356]Hasen, "Campaign Finance Laws and the Rupert Murdoch Problem," 1627-65.

194

choice/egalitarian pluralist model to speculate that media owners use their company's political endorsements to secure access to public officials and further influence their own interests. Hasen further suggested that political influence may be a strong motivator to own media organizations and that those owners could use the companies to influence public opinion for their own self-interests. Such self-interests could include political favors, gaining or maintaining access to candidates, or influencing principled decision-making.[357]

Hasen's argument, then, implies that media owners are susceptible to outside pressures that could, in turn, affect content. Supporting this implication, Shoemaker and Reese have suggested that even though top-level media executives may not often attempt to influence specific news stories, "they may do so under pressure from leaders of other powerful institutions."[358] Conversely, Hasen's argument also implies that media owners may exert pressure on outside organizations, including political institutions, by donating money to support campaigns in order to further their own interests.

One potential drawback to this study's overall findings is the fact the sample more heavily represented reporters from larger markets. Although respondents were not specifically questioned regarding their *own* stations, which would be situated in these markets, there is a chance that their responses might be based on views of their own news organizations. As previously noted, a fairly large number of cases were required since this project used a model-building approach. Briefly, the larger sample was needed to randomly split the data file to use the first file for exploring and modifying the model, and the second for confirming the changes made in the model in the first step. Because there are only a

---

[357]Ibid, 1644.

[358]Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message*, 132.

195

given number of "general" reporters, all those listed in Bacon's MediaSource meeting the specified criteria were considered for survey participation. In other words, sampling to obtain a stratified sample based on the population was not possible because a 30% response rate was required to attain the appropriate number of cases needed for the analysis. Therefore, a more pronounced representation of reporters working for stations in the largest (1-25) media markets could not be avoided for the current study.

Although the IOMC model appears to be an accurate representation of the data collected for the study, it is important to point out that there may also be other models that that describe these news content influences and outcomes. In other words, the validated model is not necessarily "the final word" when it comes to explaining the processes outlined in the study. There may also be competing models that provide an equally appropriate explanation. To be sure, future research should further examine this area, as well as evaluate the current model with regard to other media, such as the newspaper industry. Yet even with the possible limitations just discussed, there is no valid reason to refute the IOMC model or its findings.

In addition to implications from the analyses, this study also has strengths and weaknesses with regard to the data-analysis techniques and the use of survey data. As mentioned, SEM is a powerful multivariate technique that can be considered a combination and/or extension of multiple regression, path analysis, and confirmatory factor analysis. It is more useful and powerful than conventional statistical approaches because it can (1) assess or correct for measurement error;[359] (2) incorporate both observed variables and latent

---

[359]Byrne, *Structural Equation Modeling with AMO,* 3.

(factors) variables, the latter of which is measured by observed indicators;[360] and (3) consider

modeling of correlated errors, interrelations, and interactions/mediation effects.[361] SEM is

also an *a priori* approach, which means that the hypotheses of the project must be specified

beforehand based on previous research and/or theory. Therefore, the technique can be used

test theory. Yet despite its strengths, the method cannot necessarily establish true cause and

effect because it is based on correlational data.[362]

The Web survey in the study presents its own advantages and drawbacks. One

advantage of conducting a survey via the Web is that it allows for a quick response. This

fast-paced form of answering questions is especially important for TV journalists working in

busy newsrooms. This method also allowed for more privacy than other survey techniques,

such as phone questionnaires, because it could be taken from any available computer, not just

one used at work. Another advantage of the survey used in the present study is that it was

sent to reporters—the front-line news people—rather than managers or executives. As

mentioned, TV reporters were chosen for several reasons, including their likelihood of giving

more candid responses because (1) they are further removed from the business side of news

operations,[363] and (2) the transient nature of the profession increases the chances that they

will not cater their answers to show loyalty to and/or protection for their current news

organization. Furthermore, reporters are also less likely to be bombarded by surveys and are

---

[360]Ibid, 4.

[361]"Structural Equation Modeling," http://www2.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/pa765/structur.htm (accessed September 3, 2006).

[362]Kline, *Principles and Practice of Structural Equation Modeling*, 2d ed., 93-94.

[363]Personal communication in January 2007 with Charlie Tuggle, broadcast professional and associate professor of broadcasting at UNC-Chapel Hill; See also Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message*, 2d ed., 265-267

less likely to suffer from survey fatigue than news directors.[364] Still, this survey is not without its disadvantages, as it only provides cross-sectional data. In other words, it only offers a snapshot of reporters' perceptions of the television industry at the time it was administered. Since much of the survey research in the social sciences is based on cross-sectional data, future researchers would be wise to gather consistent data over time as well; that is, take a longitudinal approach.

Overall, the findings from this study should also be valuable to those working in public relations, advertising, and the government because they shed light on how, how often, and under what conditions these professionals' communications strategies are most effective. As a result, this research may help professionals in these areas alter these strategies accordingly to ensure that they are using their resources most efficiently. The findings from this project also provide valuable information for policymakers who deal with such issues as ownership (de)regulation, political involvement, and advertising. With the major deregulation from the Telecommunications Act of 1996 and the more current debates surrounding media ownership, a comprehensive model of potential influences on media content may be useful in making decisions about industry guidelines with regards to these issues. Finally, this study has strong theoretical implications for academics, as it provides information to advance theory with regard to agenda- and frame-building research, social control of the newsroom studies, as well as the development of agenda cutting. The advancement of these areas should also be useful to professionals, especially those in public relations and advertising, because the theories apply to strategic communication.

---

[364]For example, see Adams and Cleary, "Surfable Surveys."

APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Mail Pre-Notification/Invitation Letter

«First_Name» «Last_Name»
«Organization»
«Mail_Address_Line_1» «Mail_Address_Line_2»
«Mail_City», «Mail_State» «Mail_Postal_Code»

Dear «Salutation» «Last_Name»:

I am writing to ask for your help in an important study of reporter views of how people and companies attempt to influence the media. Specifically, I am conducting Web-based survey of television reporters to better understand how, how often, and under what conditions forces both within and outside the media *try* to influence news content decisions. This survey is being conducted as a part of my dissertation research for the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Dr. Donald L. Shaw, Kenan Professor, is the faculty adviser for the project.
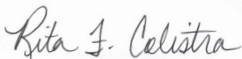
In the next few days, you will receive an e-mail message sent to «Email» with instructions and a link to the survey. I am writing in advance because I realize that many people like to know ahead of time that they will be contacted. I hope you will consider participating. Results from this survey will be useful for journalists, managers, owners, and scholars alike, as this study will improve our understanding of the nation's most popular medium. If your e-mail address listed above is incorrect and you wish to participate, please contact me at colistra@email.unc.edu and I will send you a link to the survey.

You were specifically chosen to participate in this survey after a selective sampling process. Your response is important to this study's success, and your opinions and expertise are highly valued. Reporters, such as yourself, were chosen for this survey because they are at the front lines of the news world. Surprisingly, however, voices and opinions like yours are not often considered in this type of research, even though you may be able to provide the best insight into the issues faced by industry professionals everyday.

Your answers are private and confidential. I guarantee that your responses will not be identified with you personally. The results of this project will be summarized and presented in various formats, but it will be impossible for anyone to match responses with individual names. This survey is voluntary, and there is no penalty if you do not participate. You may also choose to quit the survey at any time. However, I hope you choose to participate, as you can add to the value of this project by taking a few minutes to share your opinions and industry knowledge.

Regardless of whether you choose to participate, you are welcome to a summary of my findings. To receive a summary, hit "reply" to the e-mail invitation that you will soon receive, and send me a message with the request. If you have any questions or concerns about participating in this study, I would be happy to talk with you. You can reach me by e-mail at colistra@email.unc.edu or by phone at (919) 260-2748.

Sincerely,

Rita F. Colistra
Roy H. Park Doctoral Fellow and Ph.D. Candidate | University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

P.S. If you would prefer to complete the survey by mail or phone, please contact me and I will be happy to accommodate you.

This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at UNC-Chapel Hill. If you have any concerns about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the IRB at (919) 966-3113 or by e-mail at IRB_subjects@unc.edu. Refer to study number 07-0088.

Appendix 2. E-mail Invitation/Recruitment Message for Potential Survey Participants

«First Name»,

A few days ago, you should have received a letter via postal mail asking for your participation in an important survey as a part of my dissertation research for the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Briefly, I am conducting Web-based survey of television reporters to better understand how, how often, and under what conditions do forces both within and outside the media *try* to influence news content decisions.

If you are interested in participating, you can follow this link to the brief survey: **«Respondent-Specific URL».** It should take only a few minutes of your time. Keep in mind that there no right or wrong answers, as I am only interested in obtaining your perceptions about issues facing the television industry in general. You may complete and submit the survey electronically from any computer with Internet access.

You were specifically chosen to participate in this study after a selective sampling process. Your response is important to this study's success, and your opinions and expertise are highly valued. This survey is voluntary, and there is no penalty if you do not participate. You may also choose to quit the survey at any time. However, I hope you choose to participate, as you can add to the value of this project by taking a few minutes to share your opinions and industry knowledge. Results from this survey will be useful for journalists, managers, owners, and scholars alike because it will improve our understanding of the issues facing the television industry.

Your answers are private and confidential. I guarantee that your responses will not be identified with you personally. The results of this project will be summarized and presented in various formats, but it will be impossible for anyone to match responses with individual names.

Regardless of whether you choose to participate, you are welcome to a summary of my findings. To receive a summary, hit "reply" and send me a message with the request. I hope you will consider participating. Again, you can follow this link to the survey: **«Respondent-Specific URL»**

If you have any questions or concerns about completing this survey, I would be happy to talk with you. You can reach me by e-mail at colistra@email.unc.edu or by phone at (919) 260-2748.

Sincerely,

Rita F. Colistra
Roy H. Park Doctoral Fellow and Ph.D. Candidate | University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Appendix 3. Consent for Web Survey

IRB Study # 07-0088

By participating in this online survey, you agree to participate in a study being conducted by a doctoral student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Your participation is voluntary and you may quit at any time. All precautions have been taken so that there are no risks to your participation, unless you feel uncomfortable answering questions about the television industry in general and a few general questions about yourself and the organization you work for. If you have any questions about this study, you may contact the principal investigator, Rita Colistra, at colistra@email.unc.edu or (919) 260-2748. The faculty advisor for this project, Dr. Donald L. Shaw, may also be contacted at cardinal@email.unc.edu or (919) 962-4087.

All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board at (919) 966-3113 or by e-mail to IRB_subjects@unc.edu. If you contact the IRB, please refer to study number 07-0088.

What is the purpose of this study?
The purpose of this research study is to assess reporters' perceptions of how people and companies *try* to influence news coverage decisions. This research aims to gather and assess your viewpoints about the television industry in general, not necessarily about your own news organization.

How many people will take part in this study?
If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of approximately 2,000 people asked to participate in this survey.

How long will your part in this study last?
The survey takes approximately 13 minutes to complete.

How will your privacy be protected?
Every effort will be made to ensure that your privacy and confidentiality will be protected. Your name and contact information will only be used to track who has or has not responded so reminder messages may be sent. Your name will not be used in any of the information obtained from this study or in any of the research reports. No information will be attributed to any individual participant. Results of each question will be compiled electronically by the Web survey program, and only I, Rita Colistra, and a statistical methods advisor will have access to these data. I will avoid deductive disclosure by limiting my analysis to the overall data collected by all respondents.

Thank you for your participation in this research.

Please click on the arrow in the right-hand corner below to begin the survey.

Appendix 4. Web Survey of Television Reporters

Note: Questions were not numbered on the actual Web survey. They are only numbered here for clarity and for in-text references to particular survey items.

> *Please choose the one option that best describes your level of agreement with the following statements, with 1 being Strongly Disagree and 7 being Strongly Agree.*
> *Remember, there are no right or wrong answers. I am only interested in <u>your viewpoints</u> about the television industry in general.*

1. An inadequate staff size hurts the quality of news coverage.
    Strongly Disagree   *Strongly Agree*
           1   2   3   4   5   6   7

2. Public relations or advertising materials fill holes in news programs caused by lack of staff.
    Strongly Disagree   *Strongly Agree*
           1   2   3   4   5   6   7

3. When the size of staff is reduced at a station, it has negative effects on news coverage.
    Strongly Disagree   *Strongly Agree*
           1   2   3   4   5   6   7

4. Station owners and top-level executives have little to no influence on news coverage and content decisions.
    Strongly Disagree   *Strongly Agree*
           1   2   3   4   5   6   7

5. In general, TV stations stress profits over quality of coverage.
    Strongly Disagree   *Strongly Agree*
           1   2   3   4   5   6   7

6. Bottom-line pressures are hurting the quality of television news coverage.
    Strongly Disagree   *Strongly Agree*
           1   2   3   4   5   6   7

7. In your opinion, how often do advertisers pressure TV stations/journalists for favorable coverage?
    Almost Never   *Very Often*
              1   2   3   4   5   6   7

8. How often do stations/journalists decide **not** to run some stories because of advertiser pressures (pressures may include threats to pull ads)?
    Almost Never   *Very Often*
              1   2   3   4   5   6   7

9. How often do journalists/stations cover or emphasize particular stories because of influences from advertisers?
    Almost Never   *Very Often*
              1   2   3   4   5   6   7

10. How often do journalists/stations cover a story **in a certain way** because of influences from advertisers (e.g., the angle of a story or stance on an issue)?
    Almost Never   *Very Often*
              1   2   3   4   5   6   7

11. How often do journalists/stations **not** cover (avoid covering) stories or topics because of influences from advertisers?
    Almost Never   *Very Often*
              1   2   3   4   5   6   7

12. In your opinion, how often do advertisers **try** to influence which stories are covered or emphasized?
    Almost Never   *Very Often*
              1   2   3   4   5   6   7

13. How often do advertisers **try** to influence **how** a story is covered (e.g., the angle of a story or stance on an issue)?
    Almost Never   *Very Often*
              1   2   3   4   5   6   7

203

14. How often do advertisers **try** to influence journalists/stations **not** to cover (avoid covering) a particular story or topic?
Almost Never   *Very Often*
           1   2   3   4   5   6   7

15. How often do stations/journalists decide **not** to run stories because they might offend owners or top-level executives?
Almost Never   *Very Often*
           1   2   3   4   5   6   7

16. How often do journalists/stations cover or emphasize particular stories because of influences from owners or top-level executives?
Almost Never   *Very Often*
           1   2   3   4   5   6   7

17. How often do journalists/stations cover a story **in a certain way** because of influences from owners or top-level executives (e.g., the angle of a story or stance on an issue)?
Almost Never   *Very Often*
           1   2   3   4   5   6   7

18. How often do journalists/stations **not** cover (avoid covering) stories or topics because of influences from owners or top-level executives?
Almost Never   *Very Often*
           1   2   3   4   5   6   7

19. In your opinion, how often do owners or top-level executives **try** to influence which stories are covered or emphasized?
Almost Never   *Very Often*
           1   2   3   4   5   6   7

20. How often do owners or top-level executives **try** to influence **how** a story is covered (e.g., the angle of a story or stance on an issue)?
Almost Never   *Very Often*
           1   2   3   4   5   6   7

21. How often do owners or top-level executives **try** to influence journalists/stations **not** to cover (avoid covering) a particular story or topic?
Almost Never   *Very Often*
           1   2   3   4   5   6   7

22. In your opinion, how often do politicians or government officials **try** to pressure TV stations for favorable coverage?
Almost Never   *Very Often*
           1   2   3   4   5   6   7

23. How often do journalists/stations decide **not to run** some stories because they might offend politicians or government officials?
    Almost Never   *Very Often*
            1   2   3   4   5   6   7

24. How often do journalists/stations feel pressured to avoid controversial topics about politicians or government officials?
    Almost Never   *Very Often*
            1   2   3   4   5   6   7

25. How often do politicians or government officials provide leaks or off-the-record interviews to stations?
    Almost Never   *Very Often*
            1   2   3   4   5   6   7

26. How often do stations receive VNRs/prepackaged news **produced by government agencies** or other information on behalf government officials or political figures? (***Note:*** This information can come directly from the officials, their offices or through another channel, such as information offices)
    Almost Never   *Very Often*
            1   2   3   4   5   6   7

27. How often do stations use this information as the basis/topic of a story?
    Almost Never   *Very Often*
            1   2   3   4   5   6   7

28. How often do stations/journalists take the angles stressed in the information received from these sources and use them as part of their own news stories?
    Almost Never   *Very Often*
            1   2   3   4   5   6   7

29. How often do journalists/stations cover or emphasize particular stories because of influences from politicians or government officials?
    Almost Never   *Very Often*
            1   2   3   4   5   6   7

30. How often do journalists/stations cover a story **in a certain way** because of influences from politicians or government officials (e.g., the angle of a story or stance on an issue)?
    Almost Never   *Very Often*
            1   2   3   4   5   6   7

31. How often do journalists/stations **not** cover (avoid covering) stories or topics because of influences from politicians or government officials?
    Almost Never   *Very Often*
            1   2   3   4   5   6   7

32. In your opinion, how often do politicians or government officials **try** to influence which stories are covered or emphasized? (*Note:* Sources of influence may include people/offices working for the politicians/officials.)
Almost Never   *Very Often*
          1   2   3   4   5   6   7

33. How often do politicians or government officials **try** to influence **how** a story is covered (e.g., the angle of a story or stance on an issue)?
Almost Never   *Very Often*
          1   2   3   4   5   6   7

34. How often do politicians or government officials **try** to influence journalists/stations **not** to cover (avoid covering) a particular story or topic?
Almost Never   *Very Often*
          1   2   3   4   5   6   7

35. How often do stations use public relations materials (e.g., broadcast news releases, video news releases) as the basis for a news story, including just sparking a story idea?
Almost Never   *Very Often*
          1   2   3   4   5   6   7

36. How often do journalists/stations cover or emphasize particular stories because of influences from public relations practitioners?
Almost Never   *Very Often*
          1   2   3   4   5   6   7

37. How often do journalists/stations cover a story **in a certain way** because of influences from public relations practitioners (e.g., the angle of a story or stance on an issue)?
Almost Never   *Very Often*
          1   2   3   4   5   6   7

38. How often do journalists/stations **not** cover (avoid covering) stories or topics because of influences from public relations practitioners?
Almost Never   *Very Often*
          1   2   3   4   5   6   7

39. How often do stations receive video news releases (VNRs)? (**Note:** This does not include those received from or produced by government agencies.)
Almost Never   *Very Often*
          1   2   3   4   5   6   7

40. How often do stations use VNRs (can include just sparking an idea for a story)?
Almost Never   *Very Often*
          1   2   3   4   5   6   7

41. How often do stations air VNRs with little to no editing?
    Almost Never   *Very Often*
                  1   2   3   4   5   6   7

42. In your opinion, how often do public relations professionals **try** to influence which stories are covered or emphasized?
    Almost Never   *Very Often*
                  1   2   3   4   5   6   7

43. How often do public relations professionals **try** to influence **how** a story is covered (e.g., the angle of a story or stance on an issue)?
    Almost Never   *Very Often*
                  1   2   3   4   5   6   7

44. How often do public relations professionals **try** to influence journalists/stations **not** to cover (avoid covering) a particular story or topic?
    Almost Never   *Very Often*
                  1   2   3   4   5   6   7

45. How often do you believe that television news content is compromised because of economic pressures?
    Almost Never   *Very Often*
                  1   2   3   4   5   6   7

46. In your opinion, how often are journalists pressured to **avoid** covering certain stories (not cover them) because they might be damaging to the economic interests of the organization?
    Almost Never   *Very Often*
                  1   2   3   4   5   6   7

47. How often are journalists pressured to specially handle stories involving companies or organizations with some economic clout over their station?
    Almost Never   *Very Often*
                  1   2   3   4   5   6   7

48. How often do managers/superiors within TV stations (e.g., assignment editors, producers, news directors) **directly** suggest to reporters to cover a story that would normally not be covered?
    (***Note:*** These suggestions include a superior directly instructing a reporter to take the action or providing overt instructions about what kinds of stories to cover/avoid and perhaps how to cover them.)
    Almost Never   *Very Often*
                  1   2   3   4   5   6   7

49. How often do journalists cover the topic/story as a result of this type of suggestion?
Almost Never   *Very Often*
             1   2   3   4   5   6   7

50. How often do managers/superiors working within TV stations **directly** suggest **how** a story or topic should be covered (e.g., the angle of the story or stance on the issue)?
Almost Never   *Very Often*
             1   2   3   4   5   6   7

51. How often do journalists cover the topic/story **in the way** the manager/superior directly suggested?
Almost Never   *Very Often*
             1   2   3   4   5   6   7

52. How often do managers/superiors **directly tell** journalists to **avoid** (not cover) certain stories, topics or issues?
Almost Never   *Very Often*
             1   2   3   4   5   6   7

53. How often do journalists purposely **avoid** (not cover) certain stories/topics because a manager/superior specifically tells them to take this action?
Almost Never   *Very Often*
             1   2   3   4   5   6   7

54. How often do journalists purposely **avoid** (not cover) newsworthy stories because of how **they believe** their managers/superiors would respond?
Almost Never   *Very Often*
             1   2   3   4   5   6   7

55. How often do journalists choose to cover or emphasize certain stories because of how **they believe** their managers/superiors would respond?
Almost Never   *Very Often*
             1   2   3   4   5   6   7

56. How often do journalists take a particular angle on a story because of how **they believe** their managers/superiors would respond?
Almost Never   *Very Often*
             1   2   3   4   5   6   7

57. How often do managers/superiors within TV stations give **indirect** signals/suggestions to reporters to cover a story that normally would not be covered?
(***Note:*** Indirect signals might include purposely showing a reporter a similar type of story from another station, mentioning the topic/angle in passing, showing great interest in or airing this type of story, or positive reinforcement)
Almost Never   *Very Often*
             1   2   3   4   5   6   7

58. How often do journalists cover the topic/story as a result of this type of suggestion?
Almost Never   *Very Often*
                1   2   3   4   5   6   7

59. How often do managers/superiors working within TV stations **indirectly** signal/suggest **how** a story or topic should be covered (e.g., the angle of the story or stance on the issue)?
(***Note***: Indirect signals here may include mentioning the angle in passing conversation, showing how a similar type of story was covered from another station, showing great interest in a particular side of the story.)
Almost Never   *Very Often*
                1   2   3   4   5   6   7

60. How often do journalists cover the topic/story **in the way** the manager/superior indirectly signaled/suggested?
Almost Never   *Very Often*
                1   2   3   4   5   6   7

61. How often do journalists get **indirect** signals/suggestions (e.g., yawns/hemming/hawing, lack of interest in stories/don't get aired, jokes) from their managers/superiors **to avoid** covering certain stories or topics?
Almost Never   *Very Often*
                1   2   3   4   5   6   7

62. How often do journalists purposely **avoid** (not cover) certain stories or topics because of these indirect signals/suggestions from managers/superiors?
Almost Never   *Very Often*
                1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Now I would like to know a little about you and the station where you work.
Please fill in the blank or choose the answer that best applies.

---

63. How many years have you worked in the television industry?
_____years

64. How many years have you worked at your current station?
_____years

65. To the best of your knowledge, the ownership of your station is
   ○ family/independent
   ○ group—up to 4 stations total
   ○ group—5 to 10 stations total
   ○ group—more than 10 stations

66. To the best of your knowledge, do the owners of your station also own other types of media (e.g., newspapers)?

   ○ No
   ○ Yes, up to 4 newspapers (or other type of media)
   ○ Yes, 5 to 10 newspapers (or other type of media)
   ○ Yes, more than 10 newspapers (or other type of media)
   ○ Don't know

67. The company that owns your station is
   ○ privately owned
   ○ publicly owned—has publicly traded stock
   ○ don't know

68. What category best describes the number of people who work in your station's news department?
   ○ 1-10
   ○ 11-20
   ○ 21-30
   ○ 31-50
   ○ 51+

69. Your gender is
   ○ Male
   ○ Female
   ○ Decline to Answer

70. What is your age?
   ○ 18-24 years
   ○ 25-34 years
   ○ 35-44 years
   ○ 45-54 years
   ○ 55-64 years
   ○ 65 years and over

Thank you for your time and cooperation!
If you have any additional comments, please type them in the box below, or contact me at colistra@email.unc.edu or (919) 260-2748.

Appendix 5. First E-mail Reminder Message

«First Name»,

A few days ago, I sent you a message with a link to a survey on reporters' perceptions of issues facing news workers in the television industry. If you have already completed it, thank you!

If you were in the process of filling out the survey but were interrupted, you can return to it and finish by following this link to the survey: **«Respondent-Specific URL»**.

If you haven't had the chance to review the survey, I hope you will do so. It should take 13 minutes or less to complete, and your opinions will speak for many television news reporters around the country. It will also help me complete my dissertation!

Thank you for participating in the study of reporters' perceptions of issues facing news workers in the television industry. Follow this link to the survey: **«Respondent-Specific URL»**.

Sincerely,

Rita F. Colistra
Roy H. Park Doctoral Fellow and Ph.D. Candidate | University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Appendix 6. Second E-mail Reminder Message

«First Name»,

Through my experience working with television reporters, I know there are some excellent reasons for not bothering to complete a Web survey: you're on deadline, they look like "SPAM," you get too many surveys already, you'll get to it later… All good reasons!

But, I am asking you to celebrate the end of February Sweeps by spending 13 minutes or less to share your viewpoints on important issues facing news workers. It's for my dissertation research, and you were one of just a few reporters who were selected to represent the views of many television reporters around the country. So far, the answers and comments from other reporters have been informative, but I want to make sure I get as complete and accurate a picture as possible. That's where you come in!

Follow this link to the survey: {~SurveyLink~}.

If you are willing to take the survey but would rather not take it online, you can still participate! For example,

…I will send you an attachment of the survey, and you can print, complete and return it by mail,

OR

…you can request that I send you a survey via postal mail, and I will send it and a self-addressed stamped envelope so you can return it to me at No Cost to You. It's that easy!

What if you were in the process of taking the survey before, but were interrupted? No problem! You can pick up where you left off by

following this link {~SurveyLink~}.

All survey questions are unique, and your views will speak for many others in the industry. I appreciate your time and recognize that asking for 13 minutes is a tall order. Still, I believe this unique project will provide some useful information for the industry. Thank you for being a part of it.

I hope you will take a few minutes to participate.

Sincerely,

Rita F. Colistra
Roy H. Park Doctoral Fellow and Ph.D. Candidate | University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Appendix 7: Third E-mail Reminder Message

«First Name»,

I need about 100 more surveys completed, and I need your help!

Do you have opinions about important issues facing news workers in the media industry? If so, please take 13 minutes or less to complete a survey for my dissertation. I sent you messages with a link to the survey several days ago. If you would like to participate now but have disregarded or misplaced the previous messages, **please follow this link to the survey: {~SurveyLink~}**

I am concluding the project at the end of this weekend and would really like to include your opinions in the final report. Your response is important to this study's success, as I need about 100 more survey completions to reach my required response goal. Your time, opinions and expertise are highly valued, and you were one of only a few reporters chosen for this study. As with the ratings books, the comments of a few speak for many others. Plus, you'd really be helping me out with my project!

A few notes...

...If you have "finished" the survey but continue to get reminder messages, you likely need to officially close out your survey. To do so, click on the link in this e-mail, and it should take you to the page with the "comments" box. You need to click on the arrow in the lower right-hand corner, which will take you to the "Your data has been collected" page. This closes out the survey and records your responses. Or, if you prefer, send a reply to this message with the words "do it for me" in the subject line or body of the message, and I will close out the survey for you.

...If you don't feel comfortable taking this survey via your work e-mail, you can forward this message to a personal e-mail account and take the survey from there.

...If you have started the survey, you can finish it by clicking the link in this message.

...If you requested/received/completed a survey by mail, please disregard this message.

Again, you can access the survey by following this link: {~SurveyLink~}

If you have any questions or concerns about completing this survey, you can reach me by e-mail at colistra@email.unc.edu or by phone at (919) 260-2748.
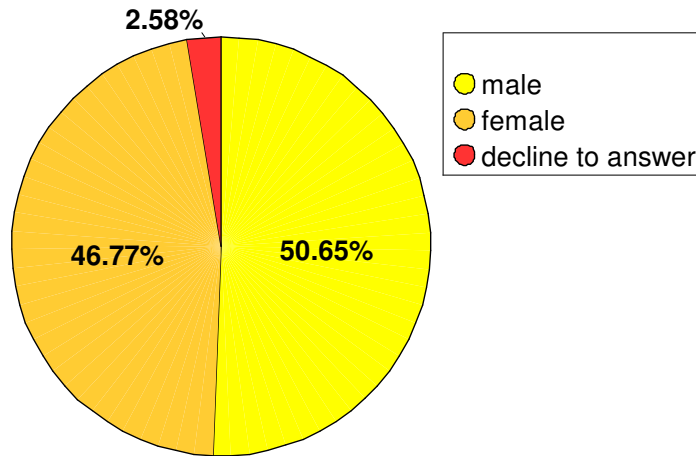
Thanks again,

Rita F. Colistra
Roy H. Park Doctoral Fellow and Ph.D. Candidate | University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Appendix 8. Respondent Demographic Information

Gender

Age Range

Age Range	*f*	%	Valid %
18-24	57	9.2	9.3
25-34	313	50.6	51
35-44	131	21.2	21.3
45-54	77	12.5	12.5
55-64	32	5.2	5.2
65 and over	4	.6	.7
Didn't answer/ Missing	4	.6	--
Total	618	100	100

DMA Category

DMA	*f*	%
1-25	429	69.4
26-50	67	10.8
51-75	33	5.3
76-100	45	7.3
101 and over	44	7.1
Total	618	100

Note: DMAs were not grouped into categories for the overall analysis. They are only presented as such here for clarity.

Number of Years Working in the Television Industry

Range*	f	%	Valid %
1-5 years	131	21.2	21.4
6-10 years	185	29.9	30.2
11-15 years	114	18.4	18.6
16-20 years	59	9.5	9.6
21+ years	124	20.1	20.2
Didn't answer/ Missing	5	.8	--
Total	618	100	100

Mean=12.76; SD=9.04

Note: The answer options were not presented as ordinal-level groups in the survey. They are only presented as such here for clarity.

Number of Years at Current Station

Range*	f	%	Valid %
1-5 years	400	64.7	65.4
6-10 years	95	15.4	15.5
11-15 years	48	7.8	7.8
16-20 years	25	4.0	4.1
21+ years	44	7.1	7.2
Didn't answer/ Missing	6	1.0	--
Total	618	100	100

Mean=6.77; SD=6.79

Note: The answer options were not presented as ordinal-level groups in the survey. They are only presented as such here for clarity.

Number of People Working in Current Station's News Department

News Staff Size Range	f	%	Valid %
1-10	17	2.8	2.8
11-20	53	8.6	8.6
21-30	97	15.7	15.8
31-50	156	25.2	25.4
51+	292	47.2	47.5
Didn't answer/ Missing	3	.5	--
Total	618	100	100

Ownership of Station

Ownership	*f*	*%*	Valid *%*
Family/Independent	68	11.0	11.0
Group—up to 4 stations total	36	5.8	5.8
Group—5 to 10 stations total	132	21.4	21.4
Group—more than 10 stations	380	61.5	61.7
Didn't answer/ Missing	2	.3	--
Total	618	100	100

Private or Public Ownership

9.82%

29.63%

60.55%

privately owned
publicly owned--has publicly traded stock
don't know
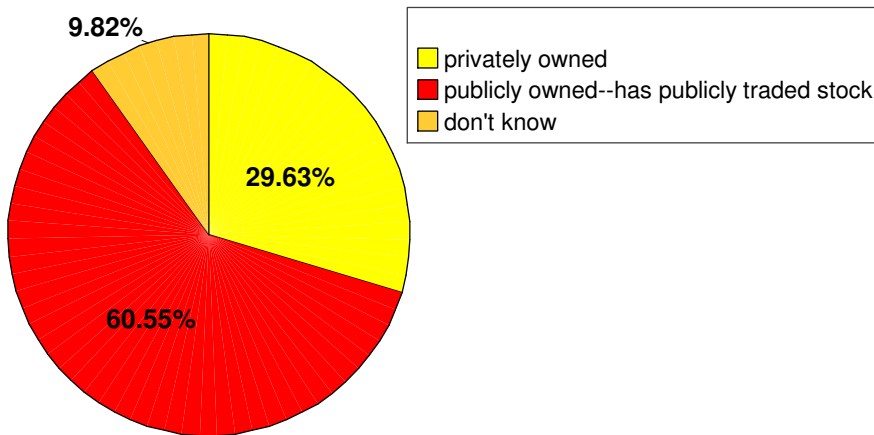
Cross-Ownership Status
(**Survey Question:** *To the best of your knowledge, do the owners of your station also own other types of media (e.g., newspapers)?*)

Status	*f*	*%*	Valid *%*
No	166	26.9	26.9
Yes, up to 4 newspapers (or other type of media)	129	20.9	20.9
Yes, 5 to 10 newspapers (or other type of media)	67	10.8	10.9
Yes, more than 10 newspapers (or other type of media)	206	33.3	33.4
Don't Know	48	7.8	7.8
Didn't answer/ Missing	2	.3	--
Total	618	100	100

Correlation Matrix of Measured Variables

	Mkt Size	Adv	PR	Political	Staff	Econ	Ownr/ Exec	Direct Mgmt	Indirct Mgmt	Agnda Bldng	Frame Bldng	Agnda Cttng
Mkt Size	1	-.233	.022	.100	-.075	-.027	-.139	-.100	-.080	-.117	-.111	-.136
Adv		1	.303	.337	.131	.413	.502	.246	.324	.411	.389	.463
PR			1	.539	.159	.216	.240	.213	.288	.291	.301	.236
Political				1	.237	.187	.212	.175	.270	.259	.276	.175
Staff					1	.331	.151	.127	.188	.149	.152	.116
Econ						1	.531	.428	.452	.570	.551	.616
Ownr/Exec							1	.408	.406	.570	.567	.675
Direct Mgmt								1	.659	.688	.680	.634
Indirct Mgmt									1	.690	.694	.618
Agnda Bldng										1	.886	.764
Frame Bldng											1	.791
Agnda Cttng												1
Mean	123.858	14.013	14.863	22.696	12.420	19.758	8.857	12.015	11.796	30.006	27.063	28.678
Std. Deviation	53.595	5.771	4.250	6.643	1.837	6.206	4.564	4.532	5.042	9.434	8.385	10.194

Appendix 10. Unstandardized Maximum Likelihood Estimates versus Bootstrapped
Estimates using 2000 Samples with Replacement

	ML Estimate (S.E.)	BS$_{2000}$ Estimate (S.E.)	Estimate Bias (S.E. Bias)
Market Size → Extramedia Infl.	-.022 (.004)	-.022 (.005)	.000 (.000)
Extramedia Infl. → Org. Infl.	.471 (.059)	.468 (.086)	-.002 (.002)
Org. Infl. → Within-Media Infl.	.782 (.062)	.783 (.070)	.001 (.002)
Within-Media Infl. → Content Infl./Out.	1.301 (.104)	1.304 (.105)	.002 (.002)
Org. Infl. → Content Infl./Out.	1.140 (.118)	1.144 (.126)	.004 (.003)
Extramedia Infl. → Adv. Press. meas.	1.000 [a]	1.000	.000
Extramedia Infl. → PR Press. meas.	.303 (.046)	.301 (.070)	-.002 (.002)
Extramedia Infl. → Political Press. meas.	.494 (.073)	.491 (.090)	-.003 (.002)
Content Infl./Out. → Agenda Cutting meas.	1.000 [a]	1.000	.000
Content Infl./Out. → Frame Building meas.	.851 (.026)	.852 (.030)	.001 (.001)
Content Infl./Out. → Agenda Building meas.	.992 (.032)	.994 (.033)	.002 (.001)
Org. Infl. → Owner/Exec. Press. meas.	1.000 [a]	1.000	.000
Org. Infl. → Economic Press. meas.	1.251 (.075)	1.256 (.081)	.005 (.002)
Org. Infl. → Staff Size Press. meas.	.097 (.023)	.097 (.024)	.000 (.001)
Within-Media Infl. → Dir. Mgmt Press. meas.	.905 (.042)	.906 (.043)	.001 (.001)
Within-Media Infl. → Ind. Mgmt Press. meas.	1.000 [a]	1.000	.000

[a] These paths were fixed to one; therefore, no estimates or standard errors are reported.

Appendix 11. Parameter Estimates and Standard Errors of the Actual Data Set versus the Bootstrapped Data Set

	Actual Data	BS$_{2000}$ Data	
	B (Std. Error)	B (Std. Error)	Bias
(RQ1) Extramedia Measures & Content Influence/Outcome			
Constant	13.683	13.665	-.018
Advertiser Pressure	.503 (.055)	.504 (.057)	.001 (.002)
Public Relations Pressure	.312 (.083)	.311 (.077)	-.001 (-.006)
Political/Gov't Pressure	.079 (.054)	.080 (.053)	.001 (-.001)
(RQ2) Organizational Measures & Content Influence/Outcome			
Constant	12.566	12.532	-.034
Owner/Executive Pressure	.736 (.063)	.739 (.064)	.003 (.001)
Economic Pressure	.510 (.048)	.511 (.047)	.001 (-.001)
Staff Size Pressure	-.162 (.140)	-.161 (.126)	.001 (.014)
(RQ3) Extramedia Measures & Level of Agenda Cutting			
Constant	14.770	14.752	-.018
Advertiser Pressure	.775 (.068)	.776 (.068)	.001 (.000)
Public Relations Pressure	.300 (.103)	.299 (.093)	-.001 (-.010)
Political/Gov't Pressure	-.062 (.067)	-.061 (.066)	.001 (-.001)
(RQ4) Organizational Measures & Level of Agenda Cutting			
Constant	12.391	12.426	.035
Owner/Executive Pressure	1.075 (.071)	1.073 (.072)	-.002 (.001)
Economic Pressure	.638 (.055)	.640 (.052)	.002 (-.003)
Staff Size Pressure	-.470 (.159)	-.474 (.145)	-.004 (-.014)

WORKS CITED

Abbott, Eric A., and Lynn T. Brassfield. "Comparing Decisions on Releases by TV and Newspaper Gatekeepers." *Journalism Quarterly* 66 (winter 1989): 853-856.

"About Us," *Project Censored*, http://www.projectcensored.org/about/index.htm (accessed February 6, 2006).

Adams, Terry, and Johanna Cleary. "Surfable Surveys: Using Web-Based Technology to Reach Newsroom Respondents."*Electronic News* 1, no. 2 (2007): 103-120.

Adams, Terry L. "Networked News: An Examination of Communication between Technical and Editorial Staff in Television News." Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2003.

Akhavan-Majid, Roya, Anita Rife, and Sheila Gopinath. "Chain Ownership and Editorial Independence: A Case Study of Gannett Newspapers." *Journalism Quarterly* 68 (spring/summer 1991): 59-66.

Altschull, J. Herbert. *Agents of Power: The Role of News Media in Human Affairs.* New York: Longman Publishing Group, 1984.

An, Soontae, and Lori Bergen. "Advertiser Pressure on Daily Newspapers: A Survey of Advertising Sales Executives." *Journal of Advertising* 36, no. 2 (summer 2007): 111-121.

Anderson, James C., and David W. Gerbing. "Structural Equation Modeling in Practice: A Review and Recommended Two-Step Approach." *Psychological Bulletin* 103, no. 3 (May 1988): 411-423.

Aqueveque, Claudio, and Davide Ravasi. "Corporate Reputation, Affect, and Trustworthiness: An Explanation for the Reputation-Performance Relationship." Paper presented to the Linking Perceptions and Reality Session at the Reputation Institute's 10th International Conference on Corporate Reputation, Image, Identity, and Competitiveness, New York, NY, May 2006.

Astor, Dave. "Armstrong Williams' Column Axed by TMS." *Editor and Publisher,* January 7, 2005, http://www.editorandpublisher.com/eandp/news/article_ display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1000749251 (accessed January 30, 2005).

_____. "Columnist McManus Apologizes for Not Disclosing Federal Funding." *Editor and Publisher*, February 3, 2005, http:// www.editorandpublisher.com/ eandp/news/article_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1000788577 (accessed February 3, 2005).

_____. "Universal: Why We're Keeping Maggie Gallagher." *Editor and Publisher*, January 26, 2005, http://www.editorandpublisher.com/eandp/departments/ syndicates/article_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1000777943 (accessed March 20, 2005).

Bagdikian, Ben H. *The Media Monopoly.* 3d ed. Boston: Beacon Press, 1990.

_____. *The Media Monopoly.* 5th ed. Boston: Beacon Press, 1997.

Baker, C. Edwin. *Media, Markets, and Democracy.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Baker, Russ. "The Squeeze." *Columbia Journalism Review* 36, no. 3 (September/October 1997): 30-35.

Barstow, David, and Robin Stein. "Under Bush, a New Age of Prepackaged TV News." *New York Times*, March 13, 2005, http://www.nytimes.com/2005/03/13/politics/ 13covert.html?ei=5090&en=c040ac38c7b344fa&ex=1268370000&adxnnl=1&pa rtner=rssuserland&adxnnlx=1165503797-DBum1avrEKRdb74eFEugRA# (accessed November 12, 2006).

Bennett, Lance W. "Toward a Theory of Press-State Relations." *Journal of Communication* 40, no. 2 (June 1990): 103-125.

Berkowitz, Dan, and Douglas B. Adams. "Information Subsidy and Agenda Building in Local Television News." *Journalism Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (winter 1990): 723-731.

Berkowitz, Dan. "TV News Sources and News Channels: A Study in Agenda-Building." *Journalism Quarterly* 64 (autumn 1987): 508-513.

Bernstein, James M., Stephen Lacy, Catherine Cassara, and Tuen-yu Lau. "Geographic Coverage by Local Television News." *Journalism Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (winter 1990): 663-671.

Blankenberg, William B., and Gary W. Ozanich. "The Effects of Public Ownership on the Financial Performance of Newspaper Corporations." *Journalism Quarterly* 70 (spring 1993): 68-75.

Bollen, Kenneth A. *Structural Equations with Latent Variables.* New York: John Wiley, 1989.

Boomsma, Anne. "Reporting Analyses of Covariance Structures." *Structural Equation Modeling* 7, no. 3 (2000): 461-483.

"Bottom-Line Pressures Now Hurting Coverage, Say Journalists." *The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press,* May 23, 2004, http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?PageID=829 (accessed November 15, 2006).

Breed, Warren. "Social Control in the Newsroom: A Functional Analysis." *Social Forces* 33, no. 4 (May 1955): 326-335.

Brown, Timothy A. *Confirmatory Factor Analysis for Applied Research.* New York: Guilford Press, 2006.

Browne, Michael W., and Robert Cudeck. "Alternative Ways of Assessing Model Fit." In *Testing Structural Equation Models*, eds. Kenneth A. Bollen and J. Scott Long, 136-162, Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1993.

Busterna, John C. "How Managerial Ownership Affects Profit Maximization in Newspaper Firms." *Journalism Quarterly* 66 (summer 1989): 302-07, 358.

_____. "Ownership, CATV, and the Quality of Local Television News." Paper presented to the annual meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism, Seattle, Wash., August 15, 1978.

_____. "Television Station Ownership Effects on Programming and Idea Diversity: Baseline Data." *Journal of Media Economics* 1, no. 2 (fall 1988): 68-74.

"Business and Public Pressure: Striking the Balance, Audience Interest, Business Pressures and Journalists' Values." *The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press* (1999), http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?PageID=317 (accessed on November 13, 2006).

"Business and Public Pressures: Striking the Balance, Audience Interests Business Pressures and Journalists' Values," *The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press* (1999), http://people-press.org/reports/print.php3?PageID=321 (accessed November 13, 2006).

Byrne, Barbara M. *Structural Equation Modeling with AMOS: Basic Concepts, Applications, and Programming.* Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2001.

Cameron, Glen T., and David Blount. "VNRs and Air Checks: A Content Analysis of the Use of Video News Releases in Television Newscasts." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 73, no. 4 (winter 1996): 890-904.

Cameron, Glen T., Lynne M. Sallot, and Patricia A. Curtin. "Public Relations and the Production of News: A Critical Review and a Theoretical Framework." In B.R. Burleson (Ed.), *Communication Yearbook* 20 (1997): 111-155.

Cho, Sooyoung, Esther Thorson, and Stephen Lacy. "Increased Circulation Follows Investments in Newsroom." *Newspaper Research Journal* 25, no. 4 (fall 2004): 26-39.

Cleary, Johanna Lynn. "Newsroom Diversity, Professional Development, and Staff Retention: An Integrated Approach." Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2004.

Cleary, Johanna, and Terry Adams. "Surfable Surveys: Using Web-based Technology to Reach Newsroom Respondents." *Electronic Media* (forthcoming June 2007).

Cobb, Roger W., and Charles D. Elder. *Participation in American Politics: The Dynamics of Agenda-Building.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1972.

_____. "The Politics of Agenda-Building: An Alternative Perspective for Modern Democratic Theory." *Journal of Politics* 33 (1971): 892-915.

Coffey, Philip. "A Quantitative Measure of Bias in Reporting of Political News." *Journalism Quarterly* 53 (autumn 1975): 551-553.

Cohen, Bernard Cecil. *The Press and Foreign Policy.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963.

Colistra, Rita F. "Coverage and Editorial Framing of the FCC's 2003 Review of Media Ownership Rules: A Comparison of the Cross-Owners and the Print Purists" Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2006. Photocopied. Unpublished work in draft for publication consideration.

_____. "Financial Conflicts of Interest." In *Newspaper Ethics in the New Century: A Report to the American Society of Newspaper Editors*, ed. Philip Meyer, 71-83. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2006.

_____. "Out of Sight, Out of Mind: Agenda Cutting in the Mass Media." Paper presented to the Communication Theory & Methodology Division at the Association for Education in Journalism in Mass Communication Midwinter Conference, Bowling Green, Ohio, February 2006.

Cooper, Mark. *Media Ownership and Democracy in the Digital Information Age.* Center for Internet & Society, Stanford Law School: Creative Commons, n.d.

Corn, David. "Saturday Night Censored." *The Nation*, 13 July 1998, 6-7.

Coulson, David C. "Impact of Ownership on Newspaper Quality." *Journalism Quarterly* 71 (summer 1994): 403-410.

Coulson, David C., and Anne Hansen. "The Louisville Courier-Journal's News Content after Purchase by Gannett." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 72 (spring 1995): 205-215.

Counts-Colistra, Rita F. "Media Concentration of Ownership and its Effects on Editorial Page Vigor of West Virginia Daily Newspapers." Master's thesis, West Virginia University, 2004.

Couper, M. P. "Web Surveys: A Review of Issues and Approaches." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 64 (2000): 464-494.

Croteau, David and William Hoynes. *The Business of Media: Corporate Media and the Public Interest.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 2001.

Curtin, Patricia A. "Reevaluating Public Relations Information Subsidies: Market-Driven Journalism and Agenda-Building Theory and Practice." *Journal of Public Relations Research* 11, no. 1 (1999): 53-90.

Demers, David Pearce. *The Menace of the Corporate Newspaper: Fact or Fiction?* Ames, Iowa: Ames University Press, 1996.

Dillman, Don A. *Mail and Internet Surveys: The Tailored Design Method*. 2d ed. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2000.

Entman, Robert M. "Framing: Towards a Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm." *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (autumn 1993): 51-58.

Farsetta, Diane, and Daniel Price. "Fake TV News: Widespread and Undisclosed--A Multimedia Report on Television Newsrooms' Use of Material Provided by PR Firms on Behalf of Paying Clients." *Center for Media and Democracy* (April 6, 2006), 1-113, http://www.prwatch.org/pdfs/NFNPDFExt6.pdf (accessed November 1, 2006).

Fico, Frederick, and William Cote. "Partisan and Structural Balance of Election Stories on the 1998 Governor's Race in Michigan." *Mass Communication & Society* 5, no. 2 (spring 2002): 165-182.

"Financial Woes Now Overshadow All Other Concerns for Journalists." *The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press,* March 17, 2008, http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=403 (accessed on March 18, 2008).

Folkenflik, David. "FCC Study of TV Ownership Comes to Light." *NPR's All Things Considered,* September 15, 2006, http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyID=6082952 (accessed October 27, 2006).

Frank, Reuvan. *Out of Thin Air: The Brief and Wonderful Life of Network News*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991.

Gamson, William A. "News as Framing: Comments on Graber." *American Behavioral Scientist* 33, no. 2 (November/December 1989): 157-166.

Gamson, William A., and Andre Modigliani. "Media Discourse and Public Opinion on Nuclear Power: A Constructionist Approach." *American Journal of Sociology* 95, no. 1 (July 1989): 1-37.

_____. "The Changing Culture of Affirmative Action." In *Research in Political Sociology (Vol. 3),* eds. R. G. Braungart and M. M. Braungart, 137-177. Greenwich, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1987.

Gandy, Oscar H. *Beyond Agenda Setting: Information Subsidies and Public Policy.* Norwood, N.J.: Ablex Publishing, 1982.

Gans, Herbert. *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time.* New York: Vintage Books, 1980.

Gold, Michael Steven, and Peter M. Bentler. "Treatments of Missing Data: A Monte Carlo Comparison of RBHI, Iterative Stochastic Regression Imputation, and Expectation-Maximization." *Structural Equation Modeling* 7, no. 3 (2000): 319-355.

Gilens, Martin, and Craig Hertzman. "Corporate Ownership and News Bias: Newspaper Coverage of the 1996 Telecommunications Act." *Journal of Politics* 62, no. 2 (May 2000): 369-386.

Glasser, Theodore L., David S. Allen, and S. Elizabeth Blanks. "The Influence of Chain Ownership on News Play: A Case Study." *Journalism Quarterly* 66 (autumn 1989): 607-614.

Green, Samuel B., and Neil J. Salkind. *Using SPSS for Windows and Macintosh: Analyzing and Understanding Data*, 4th ed. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Education, Inc., 2005.

Hamilton, James T. *All the News that's Fit to Sell: How the Market Transforms Information into News.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004.

Hancock, Gregory R., and Ralph O. Mueller, eds. *Structural Equation Modeling: A Second Course.* Greenwich, Conn.: Information Age Publishing, 2006.

Harmon, Mark D., and Candace White. "How Television News Programs Use Video News Releases." *Public Relations Review* 27 (2001): 213-222.

Hasen, Richard L. "Campaign Finance Laws and the Rupert Murdoch Problem." *Texas Law Review* 77, no. 7 (June 1999): 1627-1665.

Hatch, David. "Local News Execs Feeling Ad Pressure." *Electronic Media* 19, no. 50 (December 2001): 12.

Hays, Robert G., and Ann E. Reisner. "Feeling the Heat from Advertisers: Farm Magazine Writers and Ethical Pressures." *Journalism Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (winter 1990): 936-942.

Hicks, Ronald G., and James S. Featherston. "Duplication of Content in Contrasting Ownership Situations." *Journalism Quarterly* 55 (autumn 1978): 549-553.

"Honorary Degree Awarded." *WAPOR Newsletter* (2d quarter 2002): 3, http://www.unl. edu/WAPOR/Newsletters/2q2002.pdf#search='roger%20studies%20of%20agend a%20setting%20since%20chapel%20hill%20study' (accessed November 15, 2006).

Hu, Li-tze, and Peter M. Bentler. "Cutoff Criteria for Fit Indexes in Covariance Structure Analysis: Conventional Criteria Versus New Alternatives." *Structural Equation Modeling* 6, no. 1 (1999): 1-55.

Jackson, Dennis L. "Revisiting Sample Size and Number of Parameter Estimates: Some Support for the N:q Hypothesis." *Structural Equation Modeling* 10, no. 1 (2003): 128-141.

Just, Marion, and Rosalind Levin with Kathleen Regan. "News For Sale: Half of Stations Report Sponsor Pressure on News Decisions." Supplement to *Columbia Journalism Review* 40, no. 4 (November/December 2001): 2-3.

Karakostas, K.X. "Interpreting Regression Diagnostics." *Journal of Educational and Behavioral Statistics* 29, no. 3 (fall 2004): 369-373.

Kenney, Keith, and Chris Simpson. "Was Coverage of the 1988 Presidential Race by Washington's Two Major Dailies Biased?" *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 70, no. 2 (summer 1993): 345-355.

Kline, Rex B. *Principles and Practice of Structural Equation Modeling.* New York: Guilford Press, 1998

_____. *Principles and Practice of Structural Equation Modeling.* 2d ed. New York: Guilford Press, 2005.

_____. "Reverse Arrow Dynamics: Formative Measurement and Feedback Loops." In *Structural Equation Modeling: A Second Course, Hancock and Mueller,* eds., 43-68. Greenwich, Conn.: Information Age Publishing, 2006.

Kopenhaver, Lillian Lodge, David L. Martinson, and Michael Ryan. "How Public Relations Practitioners and Editors in Florida View Each Other." *Journalism Quarterly* 61, no. 4 (winter 1984): 861-865, 884.

Kurtz, Howard. "Bush Urges End to Contracts with Commentators." *Washington Post*, January 27, 2005, http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A39872-2005Jan26 (accessed January 27, 2005).

Lacy, Stephen, Mary Alice Shaver, and Charles St. Cyr. "The Effects of Public Ownership and Newspaper Competition on the Financial Performance of Newspaper Corporations: A Replication and Extension." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 73 (summer 1996): 332-41.

Lacy, Stephen, Frederick Fico, and Todd Simon. "Relationship among Economic, Newsroom, and Content Variables: A Path Model." *Journal of Media Economics* 2, no. 2 (fall 1989): 51-66.

Lagan, Greg. "The Assignment Editor: A Regional Look at Beliefs, Characteristics and Functions." Master's thesis, Iowa State University, 1984.

Lazarsfeld, Paul F., and Robert K. Merton. "Mass Communication, Popular Taste, and Organized Social Action." In *Communication of Ideas*, ed. Lyman Bryson, 95-118. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948.

Lewin, Kurt. *Field Theory in Social Science: Selected Theoretical Papers,* ed. Dorwin Cartwright. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951.

_____. "Frontiers in Group Dynamics: Channels of Group Life; Social Planning and Action Research." *Human Relations* 1 (November 1947): 143-53.

_____. "Frontiers in Group Dynamics: Concept, Method and Reality in Science; Social Equilibria and Social Change." *Human Relations* 1 (June 1947): 5-40.

Lowery, Shearon A., and Melvin L. DeFleur. *Milestones in Mass Communication Research: Media Effects*. 3d ed. White Plains, N.Y.: Longman Publishers, 1995.

Maher, T. Michael. "Framing: An Emerging Paradigm or a Phase of Agenda Setting?." In *Framing Public Life: Perspectives on Media and Our Understanding of the Social World,* eds. Stephen D. Reese, Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., and August E. Grant, 83-94. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2001.

"NBC Apologizes to China," *New York Times*, 23 August 1996, 8 (B).

Herbert W. Marsh, Kit-Tai Hau, and Zhonglin Wen. "In Search of Golden Rules: Comment on Hypothesis-Testing Approaches to Setting Cutoff Values for Fit Indexes and Dangers in Overgeneralizing Hu and Bentler's (1999) Findings." *Structural Equation Modeling* 11, no. 3 (2004): 320-341.

Masterson, Peg. "Many Editors Report Advertiser Pressure: Most Have Had Ads Pulled Due to Stories." *Advertising Age* 64, no. 2 (January 1993): 22.

McChesney, Robert W. *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times.* Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1999.

McCombs, Maxwell. "A Look at Agenda-Setting: Past, Present and Future." *Journalism Studies* 6, no. 4 (August 2005): 543-557.

_____. "Building Consensus: The News Media's Agenda-Setting Roles." *Political Communication* 14 (1997): 433-443.

_____. *Setting the Agenda: The Mass Media and Public Opinion.* Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing Inc., 2004.

McCombs, Maxwell E., and Donald L. Shaw. "The Agenda-Setting Function of the Mass Media." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36 (1972): 176-87.

_____. "The Agenda Setting Function of the Press." In *Media Power in Politics*, ed. Doris A. Graber. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, 1984.

McDonald, Roderick P., and Moon-Ho Ringo Ho. "Principles and Practice in Reporting Structural Equation Analyses." *Psychological Methods* 7, no. 1 (March 2002): 64-82.

McManus, John H. *Market-Driven Journalism: Let the Citizen Beware*? Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1994.

McManus, Michael. "Anatomy of and Ethical Lapse." *Marriage Savers*, February 5, 2005, http://marriagesavers.com/Columns/C1223.htm (accessed February 5, 2005).

Media and Mad Cow Disease: As Low as it Gets," *Media Tenor Quarterly Journal* no. 2 (2003): 72, http://www.mediatenor.com/show_all.php?keywords=agenda%20 cutting (accessed June 5, 2005).

Miller, Barbara Manning. "Issue Advocacy to Community Stakeholders: A Structural Equation Model of Potential Outcomes." Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2006.

Meyer, Philip. *Ethical Journalism*. White Plains, N.Y.: Longman Inc., 1987.

Neuman, W. Russell, Marion R. Just, and Ann N. Crigler. *Common Knowledge: News and the Construction of Political Meaning.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Ohlemacher, Stephen. "Report: Americans Media Use Rising." *Guardian (London) Unlimited*, December 15, 2006, http://www.guardian.co.uk/uslatest/story/0,,-6282121,00.html (accessed December 16, 2006).

Olien, Clarice N., Phillip J. Tichenor, and George A. Donohue. "Relation between Corporate Ownership and Editor Attitudes about Business." *Journalism Quarterly* 65 (summer 1988): 259-66.

Pan, Zhongdang, and Gerald M. Kosicki. "Framing as a Strategic Action in Public Deliberation." In *Framing Public Life: Perspectives on Media and our Understanding of the Social World*, eds. Stephen D. Reese, Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., and August E. Grant, 35-65. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2001.

Papper, Bob. "On the Road to Recovery." *RTNDA/Ball State University Survey*, http://www.bsu.edu/web/rpapper/staff%2003%20v6.htm (accessed December 1, 2006).

Paterson, Melody. "Walter Cronkite Backs Away From Sponsored Video Deal." *New York Times*, 9 May 2003, 4 (C).

Platt, Adam. "Angry Dealers Pull TV Ads." *American Journalism Review* 13 (September 1991), http://www.ajr.org/article.asp?id=2095 (accessed on November 13, 2006).

Ponder, Stephen E. "The President Makes News: William McKinley and the First Presidential Press Corps, 1897-1901." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (fall 1994): 823-836.

Potter, Deborah. "For Sale: Advertisers Make More Inroads on News." *American Journalism Review* 28, no. 2 (April/May 2006): 72.

_____. "Maybe It's Not So Obvious." *American Journalism Review* 25, no. 5 (June 2003): 64.

Powers, Angela. "Competition, Conduct, and Ratings in Local Television News: Applying the Industrial Organization Model." *Journal of Media Economics* 6, no. 2 (summer 1993): 37-44.

Prato, Lou. "Punishing the Ethically Challenged." *American Journalism Review* 21, no. 7 (September 1999): 86.

Price, Cindy J. "Does Power Change the News? A Content Analysis of Network News Coverage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996." Paper presented in the News Division at the Broadcast Education Association meeting in Las Vegas, Nev., April 1998.

_____. "Interfering Owners or Meddling Advertisers?: How Network Television News Correspondents Feel about Ownership and Advertiser Influence on News Stories." *The Journal of Media Economics* 16, no. 3 (2003): 175-188.

Reeves, Richard. *President Kennedy: Profile of Power.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993.

Rogers, Everett M., James W. Dearing, and Dorine Bregman. "The Anatomy of Agenda-Setting Research." *The Journal of Communication* 43, no. 2 (spring 1993): 68-84.

Rosenwein, Rifka. "Why Media Mergers Matter." *Brill's Content* 2, no. 10 (December 1999/January 2000): 94.

"RTNDA Guidelines for Use of Non-Editorial Video and Audio," *RTNDA* (April 2005), http://www.rtnda.org/foi/finalvnr.shtml (accessed November 1, 2006).

Sachsman, David B. "Public Relations Influence on Coverage of Environment in San Francisco Area." *Journalism Quarterly* 53, no. 1 (spring 1976): 54-60.

Sallot, Lynne M. and Elizabeth A. Johnson. "Investigating Relationships between Journalists and Public Relations Practitioners: Working Together to Set, Frame and Build the Public Agenda, 1991-2004." *Public Relations Review* 32, no. 2 (June 2006): 151-159.

Scheufele, Dietram A. "Agenda-Setting, Priming, and Framing Revisited: Another Look at Cognitive Effects of Political Communication." *Mass Communication & Society* 3, nos. 2 & 3 (2000): 297-316.

_____. "Framing as a Theory of Media Effects." *Journal of Communication* 49 (winter 1999): 103-122.

"Self Censorship: How Often and Why." *The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press* (April 30, 2000), http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=39 (accessed on April 5, 2006).

"Self Censorship: How Often and Why." *The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press,* April 30, 2000, http://people-press.org/reports/print.php3?PageID=220 (accessed November 15, 2006).

"Seven in 10 U.S. Adults Say They Watch Broadcast News at Least Several Times a Week." *Harris Interactive*, February 24, 2006, http://harrisinteractive.com/harris_poll/printerfriend/index.asp?PID=644 (accessed on November 27, 2006).

Shoemaker, Pamela J., and Stephen D. Reese. *Mediating the Message: Theories of Influences on Mass Media Content.* New York: Longman Publishing Group, 1991.

        . *Mediating the Message: Theories of Influences on Mass Media Content*. 2d ed. White Plains, N.Y.: Longman Publishers, 1996.

Sigal, Leon V. *Reporters and Officials: The Organization and Politics of Newsmaking*. Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath, 1973.

Smith, Richard L., Joel W. Ager, Jr., and David L. Williams. "Suppressor Variables in Multiple Regression/Correlation." *Education & Psychological Measurement* 52, no. 1 (spring 1992): 17-29.)

Snider, James H., and Benjamin I. Page. "Does Media Ownership Affect Media Stands? The Case of the Telecommunications Act of 1996." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, April 1997.

Soley, Lawrence C., and Robert L. Craig. "Advertising Pressures on Newspapers: A Survey." *Journal of* Advertising 21, no. 4 (December 1992): 1-9.

Steinem, Gloria. "Sex, Lies & Advertising." *Ms.* 1, no. 1 (July/August 1990): 18, http://www.uwc.edu/dept/wmsts/Faculty/steinem.htm (accessed November 13, 2006).

Stoli, Michael, and John McManus. "Downward Spiral: Many Journalists Say Media's Duties, Ethics Sliding in Order to Conform to the Company's Bottom Line." *Quill* 93, no. 3 (April 2005): 10.

Streisand, Betsy. "Network Noodling." *U.S. News & World Report*, 24 January 2000, 26.

"Structural Equation Modeling." http://www2.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/pa765/structur.htm (accessed September 3, 2006).

Tabachnick, Barbara G., and Linda S. Fidell. *Using Multivariate Statistics,* 4th ed. Needham Heights, Mass.: Allyn and Bacon, 2001.

Tompkins, Al. "Balancing Business Pressure and Journalism Values." *Poynteronline*, April 9, 2002, http://www.poynter.org/content/content_view.asp?id=3806 (accessed November 25, 2005).

Toppo, Greg. "Education Dept. Paid Commentator to Promote Law." *USA Today*, January 7, 2005, http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2005-01-06-williams-whitehouse_x.htm?POE=click-refer (accessed January 7, 2005).

Tuchman, Gayle. *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality.* New York: Free Press, 1978.

Turk, Judy VanSlyke. "Information Subsidies and Influence." *Public Relations Review* 11, no. 3 (1985): 10-25.

_____. "Information Subsidies and Media Content: A Study of Public Relations Influence on the News." *Journalism Monographs* 100 (1986): 1-29.

Underwood, Doug, and Keith Stamm. "Balancing Business with Journalism: Newsroom Policies at 12 West Coast Newspapers." *Journalism Quarterly* 69, no. 2 (summer 1992): 301-317.

Statistical Abstract of the United States. "Table 1098. Media Usage and Consumer Spending: 2000 to 2010." *U.S. Census Bureau*, January 10, 2008, http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/tables/08s1098.pdf (accessed March 1, 2008).

Wagenberg, Ronald H., and Walter C. Soderlund. "The Influence of Chain-Ownership on Editorial Comment in Canada." *Journalism Quarterly* 52 (spring 1975): 93-98.

"What are the sweeps periods?" *Nielsen Media*, http://www.nielsenmedia.com/FAQ/sweeps.html#What%20are%20the%20sweep%20periods? (accessed February 20, 2007).

White, David. "Backing to Aide Who Sought to Exploit Attacks." *Times (London),* 11 October 2001.

White, David Manning. "The 'Gate Keeper': A Case Study in the Selection of News." *Journalism Quarterly* 27 (fall 1950): 383-390.

Williams, Armstrong. "My Apology." January 10, 2005, www.townhall.com/columnists/Armstrongwilliams/printaw20050110.shtml (accessed February 3, 2005).

Wober, J. Mallory. "Agenda Cutting: Some Remarks on the Phenomenon and its Importance," Paper presented at Media Tenor's Agenda-Setting Conference in Bonn, Germany, October 2001.

_____. "Television and British public opinion on the conflict with Iraq." *Media Development* 38 (October 1991): 45-49.

Wober, J. Mallory, and Barrie Gunter. *Television and Social Control.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988.

Zaller, John, and Dennis Chiu. "Government's Little Helper: U.S. Press Coverage of Foreign Policy Crises, 1945-1991." *Political Communication* 13, no. 4 (October-December 1996): 385-405.