

ABSTRACT

WILSON, BRADLEY JAMES. The Impact of Media Agenda Setting on Local Governments. (Under the direction of Dr. Dennis Daley).

Agenda-setting studies are abundant in mass media literature. Since the early 1970s, the methodology conceived by Don Shaw and Max McCombs has been used to study how media coverage of everything from environmental issues to race relations influences public opinion, mostly at the national level. Subsequently, fewer studies have examined whether agenda-setting concepts can be used to correlate media coverage with policy outcomes, and still fewer studies have been used at the local level. By comparing changes in city budgeted allocations with changes in coverage over time, this study finds a limited, long-term relationship between media coverage and policy changes in four areas: public safety, public works, economic development and parks/recreation. Newspapers have a finite amount of influence over policy changes. Further, this study affirms that while citizens continue to depend on newspapers for local government news, local newspaper circulation, market saturation and staff size continue to decline. Finally, this study shows that by 2011, the Great Recession had begun to strain city and town resources with more impact on the Western region of the United States than other areas.

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The Impact of Media Agenda Setting on Local Governments

by
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DEDICATION

I would be remiss if I didn't begin by dedicating this project to my parents, Jim and Sue Wilson, as well as my sister Kristi. They have endured ignored phone calls, delayed e-mails and talk of statistical analysis for more than five years now. In every respect, I dedicate this project to their continued support.

But I would also be remiss if I didn't acknowledge the continued support of Dr. Donald Shaw. He is not only an amazing educator who offers a foundation of knowledge about agenda-setting, he is an educator who pushes students to think of old concepts in new ways.

BIOGRAPHY

Bradley received his undergraduate degrees in journalism and biology from The University of Texas at Austin and his master's degree in public administration from the top-ranked Syracuse University Maxwell School. After completion of his doctoral degree from North Carolina State University, he will join the mass communications faculty at Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls, Texas where he will be director of student publications and an assistant professor.

Bradley is active at the state, regional and national levels in mass communication. He is the editor of the publications for the national Journalism Education Association, a national committee chair for the College Media Association and helped to create the North Carolina College Media Association. He has received the Gold Key from the Columbia Scholastic Press Association, the Pioneer Award from the National Scholastic Press Association, the Medal of Merit from the Journalism Education Association, the Star of Texas from the Association of Texas Photography Instructors and the Trailblazer Award from the Texas Association of Journalism Educators. In 2006, JEA awarded Wilson its highest honor, the Carl Towley Award.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------|------|
| LIST OF TABLES | vii |
| LIST OF FIGURES | viii |
| INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| Theoretical Foundation..... | 4 |
| Local Media and Policy Outcomes..... | 7 |
| Research statement..... | 11 |
| LITERATURE REVIEW: AGENDA SETTING OVERVIEW | 14 |
| Introduction | 14 |
| Background | 14 |
| Critique of Agenda-Setting Theory | 23 |
| Policy Change | 28 |
| Specialized Reporting | 34 |
| Newspaper Quality..... | 36 |
| Online Presence | 37 |
| Local Based Media | 40 |
| Summary | 42 |
| METHODOLOGY..... | 45 |
| The Dependent Variable: Policy Change | 46 |
| The Communities..... | 48 |
| The Media..... | 49 |
| Threats to Reliability and Validity..... | 51 |
| Coverage and Policy Change..... | 54 |
| Organizational Variables | 56 |
| Size of Staff..... | 57 |
| Market Saturation..... | 59 |
| Web Presence | 61 |
| Ownership | 63 |
| Control Variables | 65 |
| The Relationship | 66 |
| INITIAL FINDINGS..... | 71 |
| Descriptive Data..... | 72 |
| The Budget | 74 |
| The Relationship | 78 |
| Five-Year Correlations | 83 |
| Other Variables | 86 |
| EXPANDING THE MODEL..... | 90 |
| Introduction | 90 |
| Coverage and Policy Change..... | 91 |
| Geographic Significance | 96 |
| Comparing Models..... | 100 |
| Departmental Significance | 102 |
| The Independent Variables..... | 116 |
| Size of Staff..... | 117 |
| Market Saturation | 119 |
| Web Presence | 119 |

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Ownership | 120 |
| Conclusion..... | 122 |
| CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH..... | 123 |
| Introduction | 123 |
| Coverage and Policy Change..... | 125 |
| Size of Staff..... | 126 |
| Market Saturation | 127 |
| Web Presence | 127 |
| Ownership | 129 |
| Limitations | 129 |
| Areas for Future Research | 131 |
| Conclusion..... | 135 |
| REFERENCES..... | 136 |
| APPENDICES..... | 151 |
| U.S. Regions from the Bureau of the Census | 152 |
| Cities..... | 153 |
| Newspapers | 157 |
| Descriptive Statistics..... | 161 |
| Correlations..... | 162 |

LIST OF TABLES

| | | |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Table 1 | Newspaper Staff Per Thousand Circulation | 36 |
| Table 2 | What People Are Saying About Newspaper Web Sites | 38 |
| Table 3 | Why People Visit Newspaper Web Sites..... | 38 |
| Table 4 | Who Visits Newspaper Web Sites..... | 38 |
| Table 5 | Comparison of U.S. Newspapers and Population by Region..... | 50 |
| Table 6 | Hypotheses and Variables Used in this Study..... | 69 |
| Table 7 | Newspaper Terms Correlated with Town Budget | 79 |
| Table 8 | Newspaper Terms Correlated with Town Budget Over Five-Year Period..... | 85 |
| Table 9 | Correlations of Newspaper and Town Variables on 2009-2010 City Budget Totals | 92 |
| Table 10 | Correlation of Newspaper and Town Variables on Various City Budget Line Items..... | 93 |
| Table 11 | Correlations of Newspaper and Town Variables on 2005-2010 City Budget Totals Including All Regions | 95 |
| Table 12 | Regression of Total Change in Newspaper Coverage and Total Change in Budget, 2005-2010 | 100 |
| Table 13 | Correlations of Newspaper and City Variables on 2005-2010 Economic Development Budget Excluding Subregion 4.9 | 103 |
| Table 14 | Regression of Change in Newspaper Coverage and Change in Economic Development Budget, 2005-2010..... | 104 |
| Table 15 | Correlations of Newspaper and City Variables on 2005-2010 Parks, Recreation and Tourism Budget Excluding Subregion 4.9 | 106 |
| Table 16 | Regression of Change in Newspaper Coverage and Change in Parks, Recreation and Tourism Budget, 2005-2010 | 107 |
| Table 17 | Correlations of Newspaper and City Variables on 2005-2010 Public Safety Budget Excluding Subregion 4.9 | 109 |

| | | |
|----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Table 18 | Regression of Change in Newspaper Coverage and Change in Public Safety Budget, 2005-2010 | 110 |
| Table 19 | Correlations of Newspaper and City Variables on 2005-2010 Public Works Budgets Excluding Subregion 4.9..... | 113 |
| Table 20 | Regression of Change in Newspaper Coverage and Change in Public Works Budget, 2005-2010 | 114 |
| Table 21 | Regression of Change in Newspaper Coverage and Change in Budget, 2005-2010, Excluding Subregion 4.9..... | 117 |
| Table 22 | Summary of Findings..... | 124 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| | | |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Figure 1 | A Model of Agenda Setting at the Local Level..... | 9 |
| Figure 2 | A Path Analysis Model of Agenda Building..... | 10 |
| Figure 3 | Highway Safety Act of 1966 | 18 |
| Figure 4 | Three Main Components of the Agenda-Setting Process | 21 |
| Figure 5 | Average Circulation of Papers Used in this Study..... | 73 |
| Figure 6 | Average Population of Towns Used in this Study | 74 |
| Figure 7 | Average Budget of Towns Used in this Study..... | 78 |

INTRODUCTION

Lane Filler did not set out to start a revolution or to change the direction in which the country is moving when he wrote an article about the city government's projected shortfall. "Standing in front of a 4-foot-tall wish list for the city of Spartanburg Monday night, City Manager Mark Scott told the City Council he hasn't figured out how to pay the baseline bills in 2006-2007 (June 13, 2006)," Filler wrote. Maybe not the stuff that spark revolutions, but certainly the meat-and-potatoes reporting that keeps most citizens informed about the actions of their local governments.

Even with such seemingly benign issues, what the citizens learn from the media turns into a desire for action by politicians and, ultimately into policy change, also the focus of this research. "[T]o the extent that the mass media play a role in agenda setting and thus also in problem framing, they are participants in the policy-making process as well as transmitters of news and information" (Milio, 1985). David Nexon, Sen. Edward M. Kennedy's (D-MA) health policy specialist, said: "The media senses the public is interested in or unhappy about something and so they write about it. Then the public starts telling pollsters and writing congressmen that there's a big problem. It takes the media to legitimate an issue as an issue of public concern" (Otten, 1992). Harold Holder and Andrew Treno (1997) showed that increased media coverage focuses public and leader attention on specific issues and approaches to local policies of relevance.

This research examines how the media report on the often seemingly benign issues of local government and how that reporting influences the policy outcomes of local government officials. Specifically, this research, following in the steps of previous agenda-setting research, will determine the correlation between the amount of reporting on local issues with changes in the government budget.

The research builds on familiar concepts. For example, as Allen Otten, a veteran reporter for the Washington bureau of *The Wall Street Journal*, said,

policymakers often encounter their first information about a problem or its urgency from the press even if the media outlets were conveying the problem from an advocacy group, from a research organization or from the general public. “Every agency or congressional staffer knows how often the boss starts the day demanding to know more about an item in that morning’s paper or on the previous night’s news. The press puts the information into the policy-making process.” Jack McLeod (1999) found that individuals partaking of institutional activities read hard, local news and became more knowledgeable about local politics as a result. Their knowledge, in turn, gives the local political system a higher level of efficacy. Politicians and administrators alike use the media to improve the efficiency of their agencies and to show that they are responsive to the concerns of the citizens.

Because the media can focus attention on an issue as well as on its solutions, public administrators and politicians need to know what role the media play in setting the agenda. The political consequences of the media’s priorities can be enormous. Policymakers may never notice, may chose to ignore or may postpone indefinitely considerations of problems that have little standing among the public. Still, more than 80 percent of legislators and almost 90 percent of interest groups said the media were important at the local level to communicate organizational views (Lee, 2001). But the ability to increase the salience of an issue with the public is but the beginning of the story. For reporting to be useful to politicians and to reporters the salience of the issue must translate into policy change. News attention alone is insufficient without specific policy goals and community organization to support these goals.

Certainly, there are examples of when reporting, often combined with external factors, has resulted in policy change. Holder and Treno (1997) studied the national problem of driving under the influence of alcohol and showed that such reporting was more effective than a paid public information campaign. Other researchers have studied everything from the relationship between media coverage and the Vietnam War to safety on the nation’s highways to the national War on Drugs. While national

issues make headlines every day, comparatively little research has been done about what impact local media can have on policy, the specific focus of this research. Ithiel de Sola Pool (in Schramm, 1963) argues that media outlets would be more effective if they covered more local contests so they could mobilize the more sluggish but basically more persuasive oral communication system. “The press pays great attention to a presidential campaign. It gives thousands of columns of space to it. Yet the net effect of the press on the voter’s choice is small. It gives very little attention to contests for minor local offices. Yet its net effect on the voter’s choice for these is substantially greater.” He summarizes, “The press in the United States is much more influential in local than in national elections.” With those ideas in mind, this research examines the agenda-setting role of the local media on policy outcomes.

In addition, it is important to discuss why, when media outlets themselves are reporting on their own demise¹, this research revolves around the print media. While daily, largely regional and national newspapers have seen a significant decline in circulation, smaller towns and cities without the benefits of numerous television stations or regional media still find value in their local newspaper. “CNN is not coming to my town to cover the news, and there aren’t a whole lot of bloggers here either,” said Robert M. Williams Jr., editor and publisher of *The Blackshear Times* in Georgia. “Community newspapers are still a great investment because we provide something you can’t get anywhere else” (Liedtke, 2009). Local newspapers, and local issues, do not draw the attention of the larger newspapers, television stations, the Huffington Post or Jon Stewart. “We still think community newspapers have an audience and it’s not going away,” Richard Connor, publisher of *The Times Leader* in Wilkes-Barre, Pa., (weekday circulation of about 36,000), said. “There will always be an audience for local news” (Liedtke, 2009).

Further, smaller newspapers avoided some of the staff cuts made by the rest of the industry, which, by late 2009, had eliminated more than 100,000 jobs since 2005. An Inland Press Association study found daily newspapers with circulations of

¹ A Google search of “demise of newspapers” (one of the top search phrases) returned more than 1.5 million hits in late 2009 and 8.27 million in April of 2011. Of those in 2011, 74,800 matched the phrase exactly.

less than 50,000 were spending more on their newsrooms in 2008 than they were in 2004. While ad revenue dropped 4 percent at more than 1,000 community newspapers responding to a survey by the National Newspaper Association and the Suburban Newspapers of America, industry-wide, national newspaper ad revenue plunged 17 percent (Liedtke, 2009). Although local newspapers were not immune to industry trends, they seemed to decline at a slower rate. Local newspapers are stable, cover a specific community and are likely to cover fiscal issues in that community, making them the ideal candidates for research. “If it walks, talks or spits on the concrete in our area, we cover it,” said John D. Montgomery Jr., editor and publisher of the weekly *The Purcell Register* in Oklahoma, based about 40 minutes south of Oklahoma City with a circulation of about 5,000 by focusing on Purcell and four nearby towns with a combined population of about 17,000 (Liedtke, 2009). Indeed, as David Simon, a reporter for the *Baltimore Sun* for 13 years and former executive producer of HBO's “The Wire” (a drama that concluded in early 2008), said in his 2009 commentary, “A good newspaper covers its city and acquires not just the quantitative account of a day's events but the qualitative truth and meaning behind those events. A great newspaper does this routinely on a multitude of issues, across its entire region.” It is those newspapers that will be the focus of this study.

Theoretical Foundation

Agenda-setting research started in communication research. It has since taken root in many other disciplines, including political science, public administration, public policy, sociology, psychology and social psychology. Contemporary agenda-setting research, including this study, synthesizes ideas based largely on communication about decisions in agenda setting and draws on theories within public administration, such as the institutional theory Garbage Can Model of Michael Cohen, James March and Johan Olsen (1972) and the public-sector evolution of that model by John Kingdon (2003) in the development of his Multiple Streams Framework.

The models begin with the concept of the garbage can of ideas conceptualized by Cohen, March and Olsen, who believe the garbage represents the ideas generated as the various solutions for any problem. “The mix of garbage in a single can depends on the mix of cans available, on the labels attached to the alternative cans and on what garbage is being produced, and on the speed with which garbage is collected and removed from the scene.” Similarly, while looking at nuclear power, tobacco use and pesticides, Baumgartner and Jones (1993) discussed how waves of enthusiasm sweep through the political system as political actors become convinced of the value of some new policy and how the mobilization of the apathetic provides the key to linking the partial equilibria of policy subsystems in American politics to the broader forces of governance. Both sets of researchers acknowledged that the media play a role in this mobilization and, ultimately, in policy change. But it was Kingdon (2003) who integrated the ideas into a Multiple Streams Framework. He said that at any given time, government officials and people outside of government closely associated with those officials may pay attention only to a limited list of subjects or problems — their agenda. The solutions to the problems on the agenda came from a set of alternatives seriously considered by governmental officials and those closely associated with them. Kingdon conceived of three streams of processes: problems, policies and politics — each with lives of their own. People recognize problems; they generate proposals for public policy changes; and they engage in political activities. Alternatives are generated and narrowed in the policy stream. When the three streams join, a pressing problem demands attention for a specific instance. Solutions are possible in a decision agenda, pushed there by policy entrepreneurs.

The media can play a significant role at any significant point in his process by identifying a problem initially, by identifying multiple solutions such as those in the garbage can of ideas and by motivating policy entrepreneurs to push for a specific solution. Kingdon said the media, one of the vehicles for policy change, are important because (1) they are communicators within policy community; (2) they can magnifying movements that have already started elsewhere; (3) to the extent

that public opinion affects some of the participants, they might have an indirect effect.

It is this third aspect, the impact of the media on public opinion, which most research regarding media agenda setting examines. That the media can influence public opinion has been clearly established through agenda-setting studies. Max McCombs and Donald Shaw, who wrote “The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media” in 1972, showed that, at least when it comes to national issues, by ignoring some problems and attending to others, the mass media profoundly affect which problems readers, viewers and listeners take seriously. Problems prominently positioned inevitably loom large in the minds of potential voters. Case studies, content analyses, quasi-experiments and other studies have shown that, at least to some degree, news coverage is a significant predictor of shifts in public opinion (Funkhouser, 1973; McCombs and Shaw, 1993; Page and Shapiro, 1992; Weaver, McCombs and Spellman, 1975).

In addition to the theoretical relevance, the research also derives from political science in the application of work done in public opinion, particularly the use of public opinion polls. As Benjamin Page and Robert Shapiro (1983) said in “Effects of Public Opinion on Policy,” the responsiveness of governmental policy to public opinion is a central concern and there is no shortage of theories regarding the extent to which policy does or does not respond to public opinion. “[O]pinion changes are important causes of policy change. When Americans’ policy preferences shift, it is likely that congruent changes in policy will follow.”

The importance of public opinion should not be underestimated. As Bryan Jones and Frank Baumgartner (2004) have shown, there is an “impressive congruence” between the priorities of the public (as indicated by public opinion polls) and the priorities of Congress as well as lawmaking activities across time. As shown in the literature review (in chapter 2), the research concedes the impact of the media on public opinion and, unlike much other research, moves beyond public opinion to examine policy outcomes.

The vast majority of this research, including the McCombs and Shaw study, made use of the answer to the question: “What do you think is the most important problem facing this country today?” (Smith, 1980). Little, if any, data with the answer to that question at the local level exists making it impossible to replicate national research regarding the correlation between public opinion and media coverage at the local level.

Local Media and Policy Outcomes

Perhaps the most important reason for skepticism regarding the importance of the media in agenda setting at the local level is that voters are already likely to be engaged in the activities of their local communities, and therefore more informed on issues of local importance. While a debate on terrorism, unemployment, the trade deficit or inflation undoubtedly will incite a lively discussion nationally, the impact that a single individual can have during the discussion is minimal. However, propose an increase in property taxes or fail to plan for traffic and not only will the outcry be loud, although often from a few people, but also the individuals involved are more likely to impact change. “Many national political issues may be perceived by individuals to have little direct impact on their personal affairs. ... A local plan for the busing of students, however, may inspire vigorous personal concern and participation in the political process” (Palmgreen and Clarke, 1977).

John Schweitzer and Billy Smith (1991) set out to determine which had more impact on the selection of a site for a nuclear waste-dump site in extreme West Texas. Although limited to one controversial issue, the cities included were isolated and received little coverage from large, metropolitan media so the impact of the local newspapers could be examined. They found that in small communities the public tends to set the agenda for media coverage. “[C]ommunity newspapers in the middle of a local controversy are subject to many more pressures to report from the point of view of the community rather than from some professional standard of ‘objectivity,’” Schweitzer and Smith wrote. “Larger newspapers, located in communities of greater

pluralism or more removed from the heat of the controversy, are freer from pressure and thus may practice the ideas of objective journalism.” In this case, pressure from local citizens and local media was among the factors that ultimately led to the selection of a dump in another location. The research typifies the significant body of literature that shows that local, community newspapers are different from newspapers in larger communities. Small newspapers act as the voice for community consensus and metropolitan newspapers act as the voice for community dissent (K. Smith, 1984).

How the local media cover those issues can also impact how readers perceive those issues. Researchers have applied agenda-setting theories to show that mass media not only play a key role in informing the citizenry about local issues (Chaffee and Frank, 1996) but also, by covering certain issues more prominently, the media increase the salience of those issues among citizens. In their research about the development of a controversial commercial development in Ithaca, New York, Sei-Hill Kim, Dielram A. Scheufele and James Shanahan showed that by covering specific decisions about an issue prominently, the mass media influenced how salient the issue was among citizens. “The media play a key role in indirectly shaping public opinions for a wide variety of issues on a day-to-day basis, especially in small communities with a limited number of media outlets for citizens to choose from.”

While media outlets may play a key role in shaping opinion, the role newspapers play at the local level is less certain. McCombs (2006, e-mail) notes, “There is very little work in the entire field of political communication on state and local elections and public opinion.” While not plentiful, some of the work in agenda setting at the local level, where this research has its focus, is revealing. For example, researchers have shown that a newspaper in Florida was pivotal in encouraging more public input into the process of developing a public safety building (Simmons, 1999) and that the media can have an impact on perceptions about unemployment under certain conditions (Soroka, 2002). A newspaper in Texas brought to light — and forced change in policy issues regarding children — everything from poverty to

healthcare to education (Brewer and McCombs, 1996). And newspapers clearly have an edge on other forms of media at the local level. Comparison between newspapers and television in Ohio showed that newspapers were the dominant agenda-setter at the local level (Palmgreen and Clarke, 1977).

Using the past research at the national level as a foundation, this research focuses primarily on what matters the most – change in policy – in the public administration arena. While it is impossible to ignore the influence of public opinion and the political environment, they are but intermediary steps in a logical progression leading to policy change. In addition, research has shown that the impact of the media will decrease as people become more informed about the issues and, therefore, depend on the media less. At the local level, it also seems plausible that the media will serve less as agenda setters because other methods of communication, such as word of mouth, play a greater role in informing the decision-makers. All of these factors play a role in any examination of the agenda-setting role of newspapers on public policy at the local level.

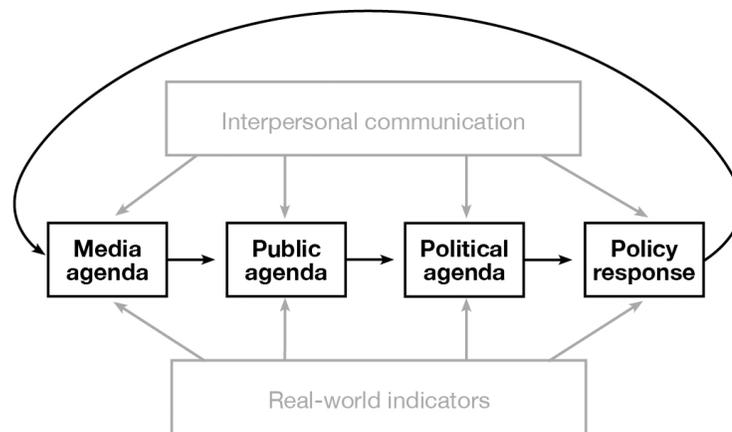


Figure 1: A Model of Agenda Setting at the Local Level

To that end, figure 1 represents a model of agenda setting used in this research, a model representing key advancements beyond previous models. Based originally on a model by Everett Rogers and James Dearing (1988), figure 1

maintains their concept that interpersonal communication and real-world indicators can have an influence upon the agenda at any level and to varying degrees. Media outlets do not operate in a vacuum. Nor do media outlets operate in a statistically valid, unidirectional world where information would flow only in one direction.

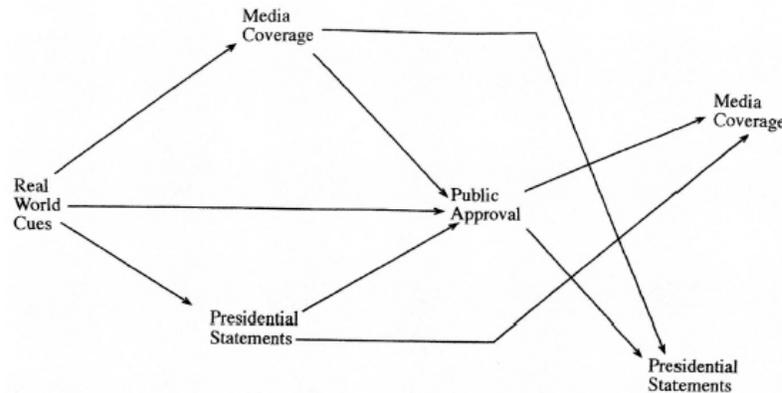


Figure 2: A Path Analysis Model of Agenda Building, Johnson, Wanta, Boudreau (2004)

Yet this is not the only model. Using a their own model (figure 2) that looked at one piece of the bigger model, researchers Thomas Johnson, Wayne Wanta and Timothy Boudreau (2004) showed how newspapers increased reporting on drug use as drug use in America increased. In turn, in a flow that illustrates use of the model, presidents devoted more attention to drug use in their presidential statements as part of the political agenda. They did not study whether policy changes were made following media coverage and real-world indicators. Their Path Analysis Model of Agenda Building not only focuses on real-world cues but also illustrates how media coverage can both lead to public approval and result from public approval of the real-world cues. Because of this feedback any reasonable model must include a feedback loop as in figure 1, a diagram that also makes it easier to understand why correlation is a useful statistical method because the correlation acknowledges that the amount of influence can be bi-directional (Campbell and Stanley, 1963; Ellett and Ericson, 1986).

The model used for this research (figure 1) also maintains the linear relationship between the varying agendas, which are loosely comparable to the streams mentioned in John Kingdon's model. The diagram adds the political element, which clearly is an influential factor in getting policies or laws changed.

Finally, the model in figure 1 adds a definitive feedback loop between the policy response and media agenda, a loop at which other researchers have speculated but rarely articulated. To show that the model is indeed complex and employs a variety of feedback mechanisms, Johnson, et. al. (2004) determined that the path from presidential statements to subsequent media coverage was as strong as the one from media coverage to subsequent presidential statements. Also, Kim Smith (1984) noted that the media are likely both to affect and to be affected by public opinion.

Research Statement

Does agenda setting work at the local level? Or, phrased differently, can the media influence policy outcomes at the local level? These are not questions without any exploration in the literature surrounding agenda setting, but they are questions without substantive examination in the history of politics-journalism interaction. Acknowledging that causation cannot be inferred by correlation, the exploration of the answers to these questions is a logical extension of the work done at the national level and provides insights into the factors that influence the passage of law and policy at the local level. Because it is not clear whether local-level agenda setting works or works in the same way, this research looks specifically at the impact of the media on policy outcomes. While paying less attention to the intervening public and political agendas, it concentrates on what aspects of the media seem to be the greatest predictors of policy change.

H1: Local coverage and policy change will be positively correlated. The coverage of the local newspaper will have a positive correlation with the change in the budget of that same item to show that the items are related.

- H2: The size of a newspaper's staff will correlate positively with policy change. The larger the size of the staff, the larger the positive correlation. After showing through review in the literature that staff size influences the depth of local coverage a paper can generate, this research will examine how staff size is related to changes in the community budgets.
- H3: The higher the quality of the newspaper as measured through market saturation, the higher the correlation between local coverage and policy change. The greater the market saturation of a paper, the more chances it has to influence public opinion and the opinion of town leaders, ultimately influencing policy change.
- H4: Local newspapers with a Web presence will show a higher correlation between local coverage and policy change. Another form of market saturation for a newspaper in the age of news media is the online edition. The more the paper is viewed, online or in print (as determined by market saturation in H3), the more chances it has to influence public opinion and the opinion of town leaders, ultimately influencing policy change.
- H5a: Locally owned newspapers will have a stronger correlation between amount of coverage of local issues and policy change than newspapers owned by national chains. Local newspaper publishers and editors themselves become leaders in the community and have a vested interested interest in covering issues that result in positive change in their community.
- H5b: Local newspapers owned by the same company as the local television station will show a higher correlation between local coverage and policy change. When media work together, they tend to use the same material so the cooperation results in increased saturation of the story. Like coverage on the Web and newspapers that are locally owned, increased coverage of the same story on local television will result in policy change.

Each of these hypotheses, using information reviewed in chapter 2, are tested through examination of local newspapers and local governments. The next chapter examines other literature that serves as the foundation for this research, generally research at the national level. Chapter 2 also contains an in-depth analysis of research on agenda-setting at the local level and criticisms of the agenda-setting theory. Building on the material in chapter 2, chapter 3 continues with a methodology for this study of the policy outcomes in local government influenced by local newspapers. With the road map drawn out and implemented in the first three chapters, chapter 4 includes an initial discussion of the findings and basic correlations. Chapter 5 elaborates on those findings with a more in-depth analysis. Chapter 6 concludes with various notations of problems found along the way and limitations of the research, a discussion of the implications for application of this research in public administration and mass media as well as a discussion of potential future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The studies of agenda setting show that the news media play an important role in what the public thinks about and the policy outcomes that result from changes in public opinion. In a 1993 review of literature, Everett Rogers, James Dearing and Dorine Bregman found 223 publications that explicitly or implicitly concerned agenda setting, a concept popularized during the last three decades to document whether news coverage is a significant predictor of shifts in public opinion. Of the publications they examined, 59 percent concerned mainly the relationship between the media and its corresponding public agenda. In 1996, Dearing and Rogers discussed the results of more than 350 “publications” on agenda setting. In 2004, Max McCombs discussed more than 400 “empirical studies” of agenda setting. While the research on agenda setting continues to grow, both in breadth and depth, the majority of it still focuses, as the original research did, on the relationship between the media and public opinion with little research on policy outcomes.

This research, however, extends the original ideas by going beyond public opinion to examine the impact of the local media on local government public policy. While numerous studies have shown that news coverage is a significant predictor of shifts in public opinion, few studies have extended the basic idea of agenda setting into the policy domain and fewer still into local government policy. Awareness of a strong link between mass media and local policy outcomes will help local government officials determine how to allocate resources and how they can best use the media.

Background

Walter Lippmann (1922) argued that political images received by the public are not direct pictures of events, experiences or theories. They are, instead, “pictures

in people's heads." Lippmann said most individuals have little time for weighty political issues and would rather read the comics. "For Lippmann, as for many critics who would follow, the informed and politically competent citizens of traditional democratic theory simply did not exist — not because most people were innately incapable of understanding the world of politics and public affairs but rather because they just did not have the time or energy to invest in learning about issues, politics and other political matters that were remote from the practical concerns of their daily lives" (Bishop, 2005). Jean Blondel (1981) said it succinctly, "Politics is too distant, too complex, too mysterious and therefore too frightening for the common man to be prepared to be involved." To learn about national and global issues, said Ray Funkhouser (1973), communities need the media to close the distance. "The news media are our only way of knowing, at the time, what is happening in the world outside our immediate experience." Kurt Lang and Gladys Engel Lang (1966) observed, "The mass media force attention to certain issues. They build up public images of political figures. They are constantly presenting objects suggesting what individuals in the mass should think about, know about, have feelings about."

In a time when the role of the media was less certain, McCombs and Donald Shaw set out to show whether the interests of voters, and the magnitude of that interest, coincided with the coverage in the media of issues in a presidential campaign. They declared, "The media appear to have exerted a considerable impact on voters' judgments of what they considered the major issues of the campaign." (McCombs and Shaw, 1972). Their study popularized not only a concept, "agenda setting," but also a methodology: identify what voters say are the key issues and compare that to a content analysis of the media those voters say they use.

Part of what McCombs and Shaw did was not new. Indeed, one of the pivotal questions in their interviews of 100 randomly selected voters living in Chapel Hill, N.C. was based on a question in a cross-sectional study by Joseph Trenaman and Denis McQuail (1961): "What are you most concerned about these days? That is, regardless of what politicians say, what are the two or three main things which you

think the government should concentrate on doing something about?” Using this “most important problem” idea, McCombs and Shaw, at the same time, analyzed the content of the media covering national issues in the area. Specifically, they analyzed the news and editorial content in four daily local newspapers, a national newspaper, two news magazines and two evening newscasts (from which a previous survey determined residents obtained “almost all” of their political information). The five main issues cited by the voters were fiscal policy, foreign policy, law and order, fiscal policy, public welfare and civil rights. McCombs and Shaw “attempted to match what Chapel Hill voters said were key issues of the campaign with the actual content of the mass media used by them during the campaign.” They hypothesized that residents were too far removed from the national political scene to know what lawmakers in Washington, D.C. were doing about pivotal issues and that most of what people know comes to them “second” or “third” hand from the mass media or from other people.

Concurrently with their voter interviews, they collected and analyzed the content of the mass media Chapel Hill residents said they used: the *Durham Morning Herald*, the *Durham Sun*, the *Raleigh News and Observer*, the *Raleigh Times*, *New York Times*, *Time* and *Newsweek* as well as NBC and CBS evening news broadcasts. Their content analysis coded the content into 15 categories and defined content as either major or minor to see whether there was any substantial difference in mass media emphasis across topics. The correlation between major items and the voters’ independent judgments of the important issues was $r = +0.967$. With this methodology, McCombs and Shaw set forth a pattern of research, repeated in other studies of agenda setting, that involves seeing whether there is a correlation between public opinion and media coverage. Subsequent cross-sectional studies, such as those by Canel, Llamas and Ray (1996) and Takeshita (1993) and Lennon (1998), also found positive correlations between the public agenda and the media of between $r = 0.39$ and $r = 0.90$.

Based on comparisons of public policy issues at specific dates, cross-sectional studies have the disadvantage of being useful only for a limited period of time and sometimes reach over-simplified results. As Frank Baumgartner and Bryan Jones (1993) indicate, however, the authors of such studies do not claim that their findings will be valid for all time. They do, however, provide useful snapshots and short-term insights. The cross-sectional approach attempted to compensate for problems with other similar studies by using data that (1) were national in scope to ensure maximum variance; (2) included measures of media content to avoid imputing effects to the mere fact of media exposure; (3) included real-world measures to control for relevant local conditions; and (4) linked media content, real-world conditions and salience perceptions at the individual level to circumvent the pitfalls of aggregating across heterogeneous populations.

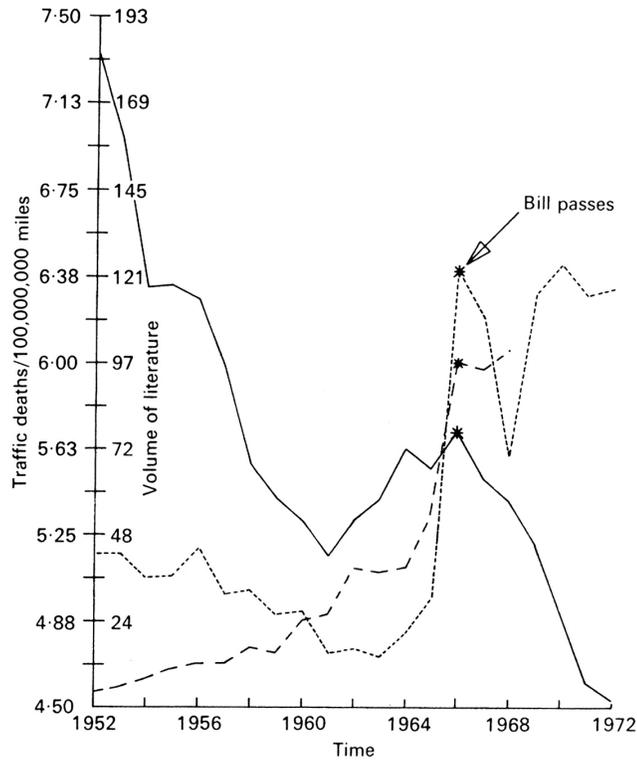


Figure 3: Highway Safety Act, 1966.
The solid line represents deaths per 100 million miles driven. The dotted line represents the column inches of coverage on traffic safety in *The New York Times* Index. The dashed line represents technical traffic safety literature (x10). (Walker, 1977, p. 434)

For example, Jack L. Walker (1977) told how a window of opportunity opened in 1966 for the Highway Safety Act following an increase in both mass media coverage and coverage in other media (figure 3). The legislation that ultimately passed followed years of action in the parallel streams. In the problem stream, a study by the National Academy of Sciences and increased traffic deaths drew attention to the problem. In the political stream people such as Abraham Ribicoff, Robert Kennedy and others were elected or appointed to offices in which they could focus on the problem. The policy solutions, already out there, included those by Federal Highway Administration engineers who were advocating for reform of the

automobile itself by professionals lobbying for driver training courses in high schools and by other groups lobbying for improved signs and lighting for highways.

Action required a window of opportunity to develop recognition of the need. That window was pushed open by a dramatic increase in the amount of reporting in the mass media in 1966. Of course, the statistical analysis reveals that the media were followers, not leaders. Experts had been engaging in debate for more than a decade prior to the emergence of legislation. As a result, policy entrepreneurs took advantage of an opportunity and caught the attention of Congress and the media. As the streams merged together, the solutions were present and the policy window opened to allow passage of the legislation. Whether such streams can come together to influence policy outcomes at the local level remains to be seen.

An interesting aspect of this study was the inclusion of a third measurement of the salience of an issue, a real-world indicator — the number of deaths per 100 million miles driven. Use of the indicator followed the methodology set by F. James Davis, who looked at the correlation between crime news and crime coverage in Colorado newspapers. “There is a marked lack of association between the percentage changes in total Colorado crime and in newspaper coverage” (Davis, 1952). Media coverage did not correlate to real-world events, but public opinion, at least in part, was influenced by the amount of crime news rather than in actual crime rates.

Baumgartner and Jones (1993) also looked at how real-world events got on the agenda in American politics, again at the national level. Examining nuclear power, tobacco and pesticides, they noted that policy changes occur both incrementally and in bursts. While their model accounted for long periods of stability, it was the bursts of change and what precipitated them that were often of the most interest as sometimes entrenched economic interests found themselves suddenly on the losing side of a political battle. Small policy changes are easier than large policy changes because they require less energy, draw less attention and attract less opposition. In this equilibrium, however, punctuations such as the legislation that created Johnson’s Great Society or the Civil Rights Act are significant. When

applied to the content of the federal budget, Jones, Baumgartner and James L. True (1996; 1998) showed that the majority of the changes in the federal budget are almost insignificant. However, they noted that budget changes follow a Paretian distribution, having a higher frequency of large or extreme changes and resulting in punctuations that represent major changes in the agenda.

The media were a major source of instability because reporters' efforts, as other agenda-setting studies have shown, correspond to official concerns. The media play an integral role in the policy process by directing attention alternatively toward different aspects of the same issues over time and by shifting attention from one issue to another. The scholars also showed how media outlets amplify elite-level disagreements as they focus on conflict and try to simplify complex situations. "Media reporters, interested in conflict and disagreement, become the winning or unwitting allies of those who want to create the impression of greater disagreement and who want to focus public attention on sensational fears" (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993). Although the controversies and disagreement may impact far fewer people at the local level than automobile safety or nuclear industry regulation at the national level, the media's ability to direct attention toward and away from various issues is no less significant.

The theories of Funkhouser, McCombs and Shaw, and with the impact of research by Cohen, Baumgartner and Jones, eventually evolved into a broader theory by John Kingdon, whose multiple streams concepts model how policy change might occur. Kingdon (2003) emphasizes that the media may be important in interesting ways and under specific circumstances.

First, he recalls what Cohen (1963) said about the media acting as a communicator within the policy community. Lawmakers, even those at the local level, are busy people who have many tasks to perform on a daily basis. At the local level, their policy-/law-making roles may even be in a volunteer capacity, not full-time. They rely on the mass media to stay informed about problems and solutions. At the national level, Kingdon (2003) quoted a staff agency analysis, "We can write

reports and papers, and they don't read it. But if the *Times* or *Post* picks up our report and does a story on it, they do read that, and it gets their attention."

Bureaucrats report that issues may not make it to the attention of the White House until the same issues are reported in the *Post*. Whether the media play the same role at the local level remains to be seen.

Second, Kingdon notes that the media may affect the agenda by magnifying movements that were started elsewhere instead of originating the movements. Leaks in and around Washington law office provide the prime example. Because conflict is inherent in media coverage, a leak that puts the losing side in a more favorable light reeks of conflict and causes reporters to pounce. In this case, the reporters were willing predators in their attempt to shape and to structure an issue if not to create it.

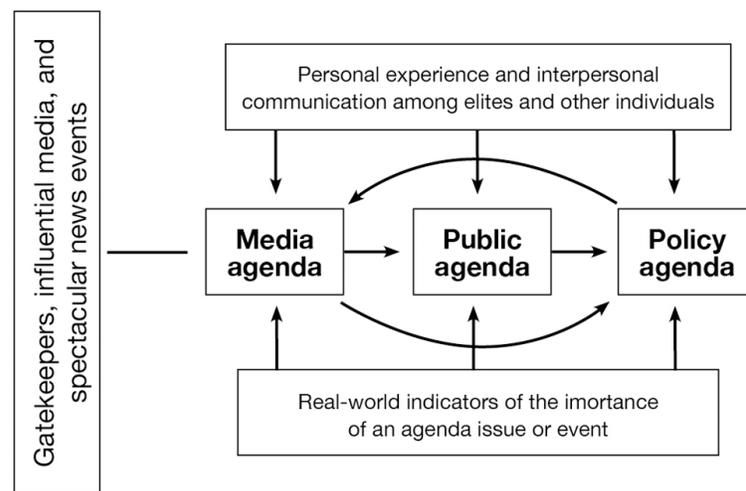


Figure 4: Three Main Components of the Agenda-Setting Process: The Media Agenda, Public Agenda and Policy Agenda. (Rogers And Dearing, 1988)

Third, Kingdon brings back the notion of the indirect effects of the media. As media outlets draw attention to an issue, members of the public write their representatives in Congress to find out what the lawmakers are going to do about it. Arthur Miller, Edie Goldenberg and Lutz Erbring (1979) concluded that the readers

of newspapers containing a higher degree of criticism directed at local politicians and political institutions were more distrustful of government and also somewhat more likely to believe that the government was unresponsive than were readers of newspapers containing less criticism². As a result, the media influence public opinion that, in turn, influences the policy agenda (figure 4).

In addition, this model and Kingdon acknowledge other factors that influence policy outcomes including personal communication and real-world indicators. Research by the Pew Research Center showed that 55 percent of adults reported getting local news by word of mouth through friends, family, neighbors and colleagues at least weekly. Word of mouth was also the fourth most-cited source for local politics, campaigns and elections. That research also cited radio as a key information source for time-sensitive, local information. Print bulletins, newsletters and e-mail distribution lists also were cited as information sources about local news (Rosenstiel, et. al., 2011).

Finally, Kingdon said the importance of the media may vary from person to person. Insiders with easy access to information might have less need for the media. Insiders, as Kingdon (2003) pointed out, tend to think, “Mass media coverage is not critical.” However, that same insider said, “If I didn’t have the levers I have, the media would be very important to me, and I would use it as much as I could.” In contrast, an outsider said, “If there is a strong organized interest in keeping the status quo, you have to overcome it somehow. Your only hope is to go public.”

² In fact, their study was more complex than that. Based on their data, Miller, Goldenberg and Erbring created a structural equation model that demonstrated that inefficacy of the government is directly influenced by a generalized attitude of accumulated discontent toward the authorities represented by “cynicism” ($\beta = .35$) and media exposure habits ($\beta = -.18$). The authors explained that the negative coefficient indicated that frequent newspaper readers felt more efficacious than occasional readers. They also said that newspapers apparently showed a great deal of restraint in their reporting of what was obviously damaging news about political leaders and coverage to remain largely neutral or positive. When media outlets were critical, the articles led to more cynicism rather than to feelings of inefficacy. “Apparently, the public’s evaluations of government performance flow rather directly from the image of the political process as seen through the prism of newspaper reporting.”

Critique of Agenda-Setting Theory

As McCombs and Shaw said 25 years after they first began studying agenda-setting, the fruitfulness of the agenda-setting metaphor is documented by three features: (a) the steady historical growth of the literature; (b) its ability to integrate a number of communication research subfields under a single theoretical umbrella ...; and (c) continuing ability to generate new research problems in a variety of communication settings. However, the success of agenda setting in those areas has not left it without its critics. Criticism of agenda-setting theory tends to revolve around one of three primary areas: (1) using correlation, a technique that can examine only a relationship, not causation; (2) the lack of longitudinal data, focusing instead on cross-sectional data; and (3) overuse of “the media” and “public opinion” as research components.

One of the intuitive problems with agenda setting — and with any study based on correlation — is the direction of the causality: Does the media cause the public agenda or vice versa?

Like McCombs and Shaw two decades earlier, W. Russell Neuman (1990) showed that there is a relationship between the relative quantity of media coverage and the percentage of the population identifying the issue as salient, at least when examining large national issues such as racial unrest and the Vietnam War. However, he also discovered notable exceptions, such as Watergate. While there was substantial media coverage, there was not a corresponding peak in public concern. At its peak, only 21 percent of the population identified Watergate as one of the most important problems facing the country. Issues such as inflation and unemployment have received relatively little coverage in the media, but the public continually recognizes them as important issues. His study was also problematic for the concept of agenda setting. Not only did it find that sometimes the media coverage would precede the public opinion, as coverage of the energy crisis did during the 1970s, but also it revealed that sometimes media coverage lagged behind public opinion. Although seemingly inconclusive compared to other studies, as he said, in some

cases, the public appears to have a much steeper “response function” in reacting to real-world cues than the media does. In other cases, the media seem to be more responsive.

While Neuman’s study began to look a direction of influence, to examine causality in practice, Shanto Iyengar and his colleagues devised an experiment, using national issues such as energy, defense, inflation, pollution, unemployment, civil rights and drug addiction. In their study, they allowed randomly selected residents of New Haven, Conn., to view an altered nightly national newscast to discover whether the amount of time devoted to a particular subject altered the participants’ rating of the problem’s importance, of the need for governmental action, of their personal concern or of the extent to which they discussed each subject with friends. Their experiment proved the agenda-setting hypothesis. In the group that viewed a newscast with altered content regarding defense preparedness, the participants grew more concerned about defense during the six-day experiment as did the group examining coverage of pollution. A third group that had expanded coverage of inflation saw no significant increase in the importance of that item to the viewers. “With a single and, we think, forgivable exception, viewers exposed to news devoted to a particular problem become more convinced of its importance. Network news programs seem to possess a powerful capacity to shape the public’s agenda” (Iyengar, Peters and Kinder, 1982).

They extended their study to examine whether the effects of agenda setting were affected by the individual’s knowledge of the subject. They found that those with little political information, the less well-informed, are the most disadvantaged in agenda setting. “The well informed resist agenda setting through effective counter-arguing, a maneuver not so available to the less informed” (Iyengar, et. al., 1982). In short, as the authors conclude, the more “alert” viewers are, the more able they are to defend themselves against the media’s priorities. Their research, together with their later work linking agenda setting to the psychological approach, provided sound experimental foundations to the agenda-setting theory. “For perhaps the first

time, the agenda-setting model has been tied to an established theoretical perspective in an explicit and unambiguous manner” (Kosicki, 1993).

Erbring, Goldenberg and Miller (1980) make another important point that is also cited as a weakness of many agenda-setting studies: “The process of agenda-setting obviously takes place over time, not across regions, states, localities or individuals.” The insight has methodological implications for other agenda-setting studies that use cross-sectional design or case-study design. There can be little doubt that a cross-sectional design conducted at a specific date or dates is the least appropriate for the study of agenda-setting effects. Others made the same point and noted how the literature lacks the temporal emphasis. “Time ... is a crucial matter in agenda setting. But, like many other matters, it is insufficiently theorized and underspecified” (Kosicki, 1993). In an abbreviated meta-analysis, Wayne Wanta and Salma Ghanem (2007) concurred that longitudinal studies were more successful than cross-sectional studies. They said it is possible that agenda setting is more of a long-term effect and does not show up in a one-shot survey.

Another weakness in the literature is the emphasis on the role of the media in agenda setting. Issue concerns can and do arise from sources other than the media, including personal experience, group perspectives and real-world conditions. Differential media treatment is simply one factor that determines the salience of issues. The absence of correlation between media coverage may conceal actual media impact if that impact is offset by prior audience differences and the appearance of correlation may be spurious if it merely reflects parallel audience and/or contextual differences. The lack of certainty, they acknowledge, makes the determination of the role of the media in agenda setting difficult at best, and they find that diffusion of problem salience through networks of informal social communication overrides early news media impact (Erbring, Goldenberg and Miller, 1980). One case study brought this point home when the researchers found that the National Basketball Association itself, as part of its public relations effort, had directed the creation of content related to the NBA.

“[S]imply accepting the mass media as the sole agenda-setting power without recognizing the important role of content providers, the organizations with an agenda to promote and transfer to the public, operating as advocates for their organization is to neglect a critical phase of the creation of mass media content. The relations between the mass media and organizations providing media content, whether the NBA, government or corporations, must be considered in the agenda-setting process” (Fortunato, 2000).

At the very least, the role of the media must be taken in context with other potential agenda setters. Of course, as a case study, it faced all the problems of that methodology as Campbell and Stanley (1963) point out. The study was limited in terms of the entities (one) and variables that were investigated. Because the primary methodology was interviews of NBA officials over a short period of time, the study also provided little longitudinal insight, another failing cited by Campbell and Stanley. While still interesting and insightful the case study is particularly difficult to generalize.

Keeping the role of the mass media in perspective will become even more of an issue as new media, particularly electronic media, allow people more input into the policy agenda through direct access to their representatives and as blogs and other media allow for more grassroots, yet virtual, organizing of interested parties, parties that can literally get their voices heard at the speed of light without any of what Lippmann said was one media role: determining what the public considers to be important.

In fact, the biggest challenge to agenda-setting theory remains to be seen — the change in the mass media itself. As Steven Chaffee and Miriam Metzger (2001) have said and others (including Delwiche, 2005) have confirmed, the key problem for agenda-setting theory will change from what issues the media tell people to think about to what issues people tell the media they want to think about. They also pointed out that the change will bring challenges to agenda-setting research itself. Further criticism comes from the continued examination of newspapers. Despite declining advertising revenues and circulation, the Newspaper Association of America continues to report increases in daily newspaper readership, a readership of

150,674,000 adults on weekdays (Newspaper Association of America, 2005). Local citizens still have few places to turn for news about their local governments except a local newspaper. Internet sources, possibly excluding those of local newspaper Web sites and radio/television stations, do not devote as much energy to local issues as regional or national ones.

In terms of a critical look at agenda setting, it is not simply the agenda-setting theory that has come under attack. The related ideas of Kingdon and Michael Cohen, James March and Johan Olsen (1972) have also come under attack at fundamental levels. Using two national issues, tax reform and deregulation, as case studies, Gary Mucciaroni (1992) criticized the Garbage Can Model and Kingdon's use of it in agenda setting. Mucciaroni asked three salient questions: Does the model provide (or lead to) a set of testable propositions for predicting the direction of agenda change? Does it have sufficient appreciation of the impact of historical and institutional constraints on agenda setting? Is the model's assumption of a loose and independent relationship between problems, solutions and politics warranted? The shortcomings of the model, Mucciaroni concludes, do not diminish its strengths. The model captures much of the complexity, fluidity and unpredictability of agenda-setting and highlights the important role of chance, innovation and human agency in policy making. He proposes that the model be used as a general framework for developing more specific models that would allow us to predict the kinds of conditions necessary to get a problem or solution on the agenda. He also proposes that the model be refined to focus on how institutional factors shape, constrain and facilitate factors reaching the agenda. And finally, noting that the key to agenda setting in the Garbage Can Model is the simultaneous occurrence of a salient problem, of an available solution and of hospitable political conditions, he proposes that the model be reformulated to stress the importance of linkages between problems, solutions and politics rather than their independence. Despite criticism, the ideas surrounding the interactive role of the media in policy, politics and public opinion, remain entrenched in the literature and warrant further study.

To that end, five hypotheses drive this research. The first set of hypotheses, looking at the correlation between coverage and policy change, resembles earlier studies that looked at the correlation between public opinion and coverage. The second hypothesis considers what impact the ability of a newspaper to do specialized, local reporting might have on policy outcomes. Thinking that a newspaper with greater market penetration might have more of a chance to impact change, the third hypothesis looks at the relationship between market saturation and policy change. The fourth hypothesis begins to examine the new media, the Web, by determining the impact a Web presence has on policy change. The fifth, and final, set of hypotheses looks at whether there is any relationship between who owns the paper and any impact on policy change.

Policy change

H1: Local coverage and policy change will be positively correlated.

The vast majority of agenda-setting research focuses on national issues from basketball to nuclear energy, issues most people can observe only from a distance. Local issues are not remote. They are part of the practical concerns that occur every day as people navigate down potholed roads to the grocery store, observe crime on the streets, visit with firefighters in their hometown or pay local property taxes. A person does not need the media to inform him that there are potholes in the road or trash piling up on the curb or that it takes 10 minutes for an ambulance to arrive at their house instead of five. “Neighborhood interpersonal networks are often heavily laden with content arising from personal observation. ... Every citizen of the community is a potential initial source for such local political ‘news’ ” (Palmgreen and Clarke, 1977).

David Demers (1996) validated the agenda-setting ideals by showing that, at least for weekly community newspapers, the greater the personal experience in the community, the greater the reading. While agenda-setting studies tend to show

correlation, not causation, Demers shows that community experience leads to greater media consumption. While most agenda-setting studies focus on media consumption leading to community involvement, Demer's work supports having bi-directional arrows in the model of agenda setting leading to policy outcomes.

Robert Spitzer (1993) found that media outlets play a pivotal role in influencing policy because they are the conduits, the pipelines, the funnels regulating the flow of communication between policymakers and others in the political system who might seek any different policy. Haven Simmons also found that a series of 120 news articles, 21 editorials, five opinion articles and one sports article made a difference in one policy outcome. Pointing out that the coverage may have been beyond what was normal, the mayor of the town said, "I've never witnessed this much coverage on a story. They didn't write this much about World War II. With enough brainwashing and printing one side of the story, people will believe it" (Simmons, 1999). A city council member, after losing his re-election campaign at least in part due to the issue surrounding the location for the complex, said, "We couldn't counteract the newspaper's coverage of the public safety complex. It was overwhelming" (Simmons, 1999). The publisher said the Bradenton *Herald's* agenda was to stimulate public discourse about the proposal rather than influence public opinion concerning a preferred location for the complex. Certainly the paper influenced public opinion, the political agenda and the policy agenda. City policymakers ultimately scheduled a town meeting to receive more citizen input, altered the timetable for the complex and deleted the fire station from the proposed plans. In the election, voters rejected all three city council members who voted for the complex. It was clear, as Simmons concluded, that the newspaper set an agenda, which became the agenda, for public discourse and subsequent policy outcomes.

Also using a hard-to-generalize, case-study approach, Marcus Brewer and McCombs (1996) examined an overt attempt to influence the public agenda by the *San Antonio Light*, which published, on the first Sunday of the year, "The *Light's* 1992 Agenda — For the Children." The study showed how the daily newspaper,

through continual coverage all year long, helped lead to push children's issues onto the policy agenda even if they were already high on the public agenda. With crime, health and education accounting for 59 percent of the coverage on children's issues in the front section of the paper, the authors noted that numerous items saw increases in spending as part of the city budget, which funded job training, parks and recreation, police youth programs, children's resources and youth services. The overall increase in funding for children's services was nearly \$6 million, a significant increase. After city council members read the articles and the letters to the editor, there was a political response to the needs of the local community based, at least in part, on the coverage given to the issues by the newspaper.

Not all studies at the local level showed the positive relationship between the media and public opinion or the media and public policy outcomes. In a quantitative, longitudinal study, Peter Mortensen and Søren Serritzlew (2006) concluded that the media may affect political discussions and certain political decisions, but the budgets and broader policy priorities remain largely unaffected. Their quantitative study used yearly net operating expenditures during 12 years in 191 municipalities to examine whether media pressure had an impact on budgetary decisions. "Almost no observable effects of media pressure are found, either generally or in favorable political, economic or institutional settings." While the effect may not have been proven to be strong in their study, as a result of a survey also conducted as part of the study, they also found that, in municipalities with intense coverage, politicians tend to consider the media influence strong. It seems that local politicians feel the impact of the media, but they do not act on those feelings. They conclude, "The media may be important for understanding the political agenda and the framing of and decisions about special or sometimes sensational issues, but the broader policy priorities remain largely unaffected."

Indeed, limited but significant research on local governments shows that local governments are almost immune to change despite the fact that local budgets drive policy decisions. As part of his movement on Reinventing Government, David

Osborne (1993), among others, pointed out the waste built in to the system. He pointed out, however, that budgets can be responsive to external forces, and one of those external forces (the media) is the focus of this research.

The traditional line-item budget system incorporates rules that encourage managers to waste money. In the traditional line-item system, money is cut up into many parts, and it is often difficult to move it from one line item to another. If every penny in every line item is not spent every fiscal year, it is lost and less money is allocated the following year. The built-in incentive is to waste money.

There is a very simple solution, which, to the best of my knowledge, was invented in Fairfield, California. With the passage of Proposition 13, Fairfield lost a quarter of its revenue overnight. Out of desperation, the city decided to change its budget system: Line items were eliminated, and each agency was assigned a budget number. Agencies were allowed to roll over unexpended money from one fiscal year to the next. This change saved Fairfield millions of dollars.

Another very positive outcome was the change in the behavior of managers and employees. Empowering the manager and employees to design their own budgets enhanced motivation and creativity. Budgets soon reflected the mission and needs of the agencies; they were no longer dictated by line items or by individuals far removed from agency operations.

While it seems the media may impact the passage of some legislation or change in policy, the magnitude of the media's impact is unclear. Also, the media are not the only instigators of change. Meagan M. Jordan said local governments are eventually prone to agenda-setting effects because of characteristics such as changes in federal grants and tax changes. Jordan examined police, fire, sanitation, public buildings, parks and recreation and highways using local government budgets obtained as part of the U.S. Census. She concluded that policy influences the shape of the agenda by directing what policies local governments will implement. "Most budget changes are small increases because policy entrepreneurs are working to maintain their interests on the agenda." For public administrators, the research raises a desire for caution. Normally, budgeting relies heavily on normal curves and linear growth. However, breaks from the status quo demand adjustment and trade-

off. “Therefore, understanding and participating in the agenda-setting process is an important and necessary skill” (Jordan, 2003).

Still, the budget is an appropriate choice for use as a dependent variable not only because it is substantiated in the literature but also because the budget is extremely sensitive to political, economic, social and legal environments. The proximity of local governments to citizens means that public opinion will play a key role in shaping spending decisions. “If all politics is local, as Speaker of the House Tip O’Neill famously proclaimed, then all economics is local, too — despite globalization. Local places matter — cities, subnational regions, federal states — they are not just sites to study as component cases of larger economic processes. Local developments can propel or change national and global economies” (Bardhan and Walker, 2010). Previous research has clearly shown that media coverage can affect public opinion. A logical next step is to establish the link between media coverage and policy outcomes.

As Robert Bland (2007) says in his budgeting guide produced for the International City/County Management Association, the budget has evolved from being a tool for accounting to being a tool for strategically and logistically positioning a community to capitalize on historical strengths and emerging opportunities. Knowing the role of the media in capitalizing on those opportunities will be an asset for administrators.

The budget, however, is not a perfect tool. As Aaron Wildavsky (1979) showed in his extensive look at the budget as a proxy for politics, the budget changes tend to be incremental, changing more often as part of an annual re-evaluation than as a response to changes in local laws or policies. Mortensen and Serritzlew (2006) focused on budgetary decisions across 191 Danish municipalities over a 13-year period. Budgets provide a condensed measure. If, as they hypothesize, the media presence generally expands the scope of conflicts, then more media coverage and competition should lead to more punctuated conflicts and more dramatic shifts in the composition of the political agenda. As a consequence, budgetary decisions will

be more volatile over time. Local media coverage will add to the spending (or budget cutting) pressure on politicians. “[F]rom a policy-output perspective, public budgets provide a condensed measure of policy with several advantages compared to most other policy indicators. If public spending is not affected by the media, then this is an empirical finding that tells us something important about the outer limits of media effects” (Mortensen and Serritzlew, 2006).

Jordan (2003) uses local government expenditures in combination with Punctuated Equilibrium Theory to show that budget functions are more prone to punctuations and, therefore, have a less stable agenda. Jordan examined six areas of interest to local governments — police, fire, sanitation, parks, roads and public buildings — and shows that most budget changes are small increases because policy entrepreneurs are working to maintain their interests on the agenda. Originally Wildavsky, in 1964, reasoned that the largest determining factor of the size and content of this year’s budget is last year’s budget. However, as Joseph White maintains, “Nobody, least of all Aaron Wildavsky, would seriously maintain that all budgeting was totally predictable from a combination of last year’s spending and some economic and political summary variables” (Wildavsky, 2001). Indeed, Wildavsky (2001) maintains that budgets are responsive over the long run. Priorities and levels of spending change through incrementalism, the accumulation of numerous small decisions. Still, he notes that sometimes changes may be more abrupt and deliberate. Although neither Jordan nor Wildavsky state the concept, it could be that the media provide the punctuation for the non-incremental changes. A budget punctuation represents a shift in priorities.

While Otto Davis, Murray Dempster and Wildavsky (1966) convincingly explain that this year’s budget is based on last year’s budget with special attention given to a narrow range of increases and decreases in making decisions in the face of complexity, their work elicited criticism, particularly pleas for the definition of an increment. “But, we insist, it would be wrong for us to provide a precise answer to an

under-specified question.” Instead, they focused on explaining the concepts (Dempster and Wildavsky, 1979).

An incremental process is one in which the relationship between actors are regular over a period of years, and a non-incremental process is one in which this relationship is irregular. ... The size (or lack thereof) of the increment or the method of calculation used do not matter so long as the relationships between bureaucrat and Congress remain regular. Put another way, it is the regularity or irregularity of the changes in size that matter, not the absolute amount of the changes themselves (Dempster and Wildavsky, 1979).

Nevertheless, Natchez and Bupp (1973) insisted it was the fundamental constructs of the idea that were flawed. “The whole metaphor of an inert bureaucratic machine doing the same thing this year that it did last year missed the point. ... Priorities are established by aggressive entrepreneurs at the operating levels of government,” they said. One of Wildavsky’s students, John Kingdon, in his multiple streams model, further advanced this concept of entrepreneurs taking advantage of an opportunity (Kingdon, 2003). Baumgartner and Jones (1993), as part of their Punctuated-Equilibrium Theory, maintain that while a political system does display considerable stability, the stability is punctuated with periods of volatile change (also see True, Jones and Baumgartner, 1999). Still, Wildvasky’s work explains a great deal of the workings of bureaucracy even if it does not satisfy all its critics.

Specialized reporting

H2: The size of a newspaper’s staff will correlate positively with policy change. The larger the size of the staff, the larger the positive correlation.

George Gladney (1990) asked editors to rank standards that would lead to improving the quality of their publication. “Strong” local coverage ranked at the top of the list — above accuracy, good writing and visual appeal.³ And, “Although

³ Gladney (1990) showed that small-paper editors tend to place greater value on community leadership, strong

definitions of quality vary, most editors will tell you that having adequate resources in the form of news hole, numbers of reporters and wire services are at least preconditions to achieving quality. An understaffed newsroom with a limited newshole will not produce as high a quality journalism as a newsroom with sufficient staff and newshole” (Cho, Thorson and Lacy, 2004). Similarly, a 2001 study by the Readership Institute at the Media Management Center at Northwestern University studied 100 newspapers and surveyed 37,000 readers to identify what it would take to grow readership. Eight “imperatives,” everything from improving service to emphasizing certain kinds of content to making the paper easier to navigate, were included. The broad “imperatives” were broken down into components on which newspapers could focus. At the top of the list focusing on content — “readers want and expect a wide variety of content from their local newspaper” — was “intensely local, people-focused news.” It includes “chicken dinner” news — community events — but is not limited to events. It includes stories about ordinary people, and it could be reasonably concluded that the reader desire extends to coverage of other news topics through their effects on ordinary people. It also includes obituaries, which at their best can be engaging stories about people’s lives. The same study found that readers care more about how the story was written than about who wrote it.

Larger newspapers have staff members who can spend time working on “enterprise” stories, longer, more in-depth stories that go well beyond the surface of a topic. However, smaller newspapers often cannot afford to hire a large enough staff to dedicate to specialized reporting. All of the reporters are general assignment reporters, and they rarely establish long-term professional relationships with sources or report on beats that would give them long-term knowledge of a topic. Anecdotal evidence says that a newspaper should employ one news-editorial staff member for each 1,000 circulation. For 1995, the actual staff rate was 1.04 (Meyer and Kim, 2002). Smaller papers will have more staff per thousand, as table 1 indicates.

local news coverage and community press standards. The rankings and ratings showed the expected pattern for community leadership, with weekly editors clearly partial to this standard. Editors of weeklies and small dailies gave a higher ranking than did other editors to strong local news coverage although all editors gave this standard a high rating.

**Table 1: Newspaper Staff Per Thousand Circulation
(Meyer and Kim, 2002)**

| <i>Circulation</i> | <i>1995 staff</i> | <i>2000 staff</i> |
|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 0-15,000 | 1.15 | 1.35 |
| 15,001 - 150,000 | 1.05 | 1.15 |
| 150,001 - 300,000 | 0.86 | 0.98 |
| >300,000 | 0.72 | 0.81 |

Philip Meyer and Minjeong Kim found that newspapers with high staff ratios had better circulation. However, they left for future research how deployment of additional staff could enhance circulation figures. If the additional staff member is devoted to the content that readers want the circulation should increase.

Newspaper quality

H3: The higher the quality of the newspaper as measured through market saturation, the higher the correlation between local coverage and policy change.

News people relate quality to variables such as fairness, accuracy, variety of content, breadth of coverage, vivid writing, attractive makeup and the like. Ultimately, however, product quality is always a matter of subjective judgment. From a consumer's point of view, the newspaper that provides information in the most usable manner will be the paper of higher quality. Using peer assessment is another method of determining a newspaper's quality. How many awards has the publication won? While they are an indicator of how that newspaper compares to its peers, the standards are subjective and hard to identify. A 2001 study examined the differences between large papers and smaller papers, potentially introducing other measures of quality. The larger papers carried more staff-written material (44 percent) than the smaller papers (29-31 percent). The smallest papers contained content (55 percent) with more focus on local, state and regional news (Bogart,

2004). Each of the measures, however, has its problems, including being hard to measure, being hard to compare or being completely subjective.

In search of a more quantifiable measure of quality, researchers have used circulation or market saturation (how much of the market a paper reaches). Carl Sessions Stepp (2008) states, “Better content, especially community news, brings in readers. Variety helps. Service greatly affects readership (people are not likely to subscribe if the paper does not arrive or shows up late or wet).” When all of the quality measures are examined, what really matters to the publisher is the bottom line. It is not whether readers find one typeface more readable than another; it is good quality that produces profit (Meyer and Kim, 2002). Editors of all size papers agreed that the most important (measurable) attributes of newspaper excellence are criteria that reflect a paper’s circulation size. (Gladney, 1990; Lacy and Fico, 1991; Lacy, St. Cyr and Guzman, 2004; Stone, et. al. 1981)

Online presence

H4: Local newspapers with a Web presence will show a higher correlation between local coverage and policy change.

Competition comes not only from radio and television but also from the World Wide Web. Particularly for young mass media consumers, the picture of the world is much less likely to come from a newspaper than from Internet or from a television show such as Jon Stewart’s “The Daily Show” or Stephen Colbert’s “The Colbert Report.” A report released in 2007 by the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard University showed that not only do young people not follow the news closely but also what news they did get certainly did not come from newspapers. Only 16 percent of 18- to 30-year-olds surveyed in the study said that they read a newspaper every day, and 9 percent of teenagers said that they did. For comparison, 35 percent of older adults said they accessed a newspaper’s pages every day. However, 20 percent of teenagers said they accessed

the Internet for news every day, and 20 percent of older adults said they accessed the Internet for news every day (Patterson, 2007).

The research also helped to paint a portrait of the kind of person who uses newspaper Web sites and why they use such sites (table 2). Like readers of the print editions, consumers of the online editions tend to be well-educated individuals with above-average income who want to be aware of local and regional news (tables 3,4). In short, they are people who are likely to be decision makers in local communities.

Table 2: What People Are Saying About Newspaper Web Sites (Newspaper Association of America, 2007)

- 78% say they find information most easily on newspaper Web sites.
- 83% say their newspaper site will be among their primary destinations five years from now.
- 72% say they would miss their newspaper Web site if it were no longer available.

Table 3: Why People Visit Newspaper Web Sites (Newspaper Association of America, 2007)

| | <i>Adults</i> |
|------------------------------|---------------|
| Local or Regional News | 80% |
| National News | 66% |
| Advertising | 2% |
| Weather | 57% |
| Movie Listings/Entertainment | 46% |

Table 4: Who Visits Newspaper Web Sites (Newspaper Association of America, 2007)

| | <i>Users</i> | <i>Non-Users</i> |
|--------------------------|--------------|------------------|
| Age (Average) | 39.1 | 42.7 |
| College degree plus | 52% | 35% |
| Employed | 90% | 72% |
| Average Household Income | \$73,200 | \$65,900 |
| Hours Online Per Week | 19.0 | 9.4 |
| Home High Speed | 68% | 50% |
| Office High Speed | 65% | 29% |
| Online daily at Home | 58% | 37% |
| Online daily at Work | 71% | 27% |

To that end, the Web presence of a newspaper cannot be ignored. While the online edition may not count in Audit Bureau of Circulation figures, it is clear that a

Web presence gives readers another significant opportunity to learn about the happenings in their community.

While it should not be ignored, television use is not a part of the study for two reasons. First, the clearer geographical specificity of newspapers and the available space they afford for detailed reporting are more conducive to the formation and maintenance of community ties than is the more regional and national orientation of television. Second, television stations tend to be characteristic of much larger communities while smaller communities are the focus of this research (Jeffres, Dobbs and Sweeny, 1987; Rothenbuhler, et. al, 1996). The Durham case study by David Paletz, Peggy Reichert and Barbara McIntyre (1971) that focused on political outcomes accented this point. The researchers noted the lack of local government coverage within the local television media. National television networks rarely recount the activities of local authority structures. More significantly, they found, local television station executives are generally reluctant to invest resources covering city councils and similar institutions in any detail. Finally, as Craig Trumbo (1995) showed, television stations often obtain their stories from newspapers. Indeed, newspapers set the agenda for television stations. In their 1993 study of global warming, Mazur and Lee (1993) explained the process:

For each surge of media attention ... there is a more or less regular pattern of participation by the news organizations. The very first articles appear in specialist publications with limited audiences — either scientific journals or environmentalist magazines — but the real initiator of national coverage is usually the *New York Times*. ... (Usually) television as well as news magazine cover stories come after the *Times*, and other print media have carried the story awhile, thus "amplifying" the issue, which is important in raising public concern and obtaining government resources for solution. (p. 710)

Local Based Media

H5a: Locally owned newspapers will have a stronger correlation between amount of coverage of local issues and policy change than newspapers owned by national chains.

H5b: Local newspapers owned by the same company as the local television station will show a higher correlation between local coverage and policy change.

The issues at the local level are different from the issues at the national level. Differences are also apparent concerning the local media and the ways consumers view the local media as opposed to national media. Residents of smaller, more homogeneous communities want their media to be agents for promoting social consensus (Janowitz, 1967). Residents of larger, more diverse communities want their media to disseminate controversial information. Open discussion of conflict in the larger communities is healthy (Tichenor, Donohue and Olien, 1973).

Consumers go to their local media to get their news about politics (candidates or issues). Specifically, they go to their local television more than to cable TV news or to network TV news and acquire news from local newspapers more than from national newspapers or their Web sites (Harris Interactive, March 6, 2008).

People tend to trust entities that are locally based more than those that are nationally based (Sinclair and Löfstedt, 2001). While it would seem rational for a nation with a vast diversity of people and places, local civic decision-making and a multiplicity of local self-governing units, it would also seem reasonable that the locally owned media in America would foster trust. However, the vast majority of media are not locally owned. Time Warner, The Walt Disney Company, Murdoch's News Corporation, Viacom and Bertelsmann dominate ownership of the world's media from small-town newspapers to massive, 24-hour television stations.

During the past two decades of media consolidation, newspapers from Emporia, Kansas to Salem, Oregon found that being a part of a chain meant reduced freedom. They cited examples of being told to endorse the same national candidates

to being told to increase profits by cutting back on the size of the news hole or the size of the reporting staff (Bagdikian, 2004). One researcher found that papers once competitive but made monopolies by chains produced “higher prices and lower quality” (Eversole, 1971). Further, chains tend to hire less qualified journalists and tend to avoid the controversy that readers said they liked in the national media. One study showed that after an independent paper is bought by a chain, the general result is not helpful to readers who seek guidance on local matters when they turn to the editorial pages of their daily papers (Thrift, 1977). Bruce Plopper showed that when Gannett took over the *Arkansas Gazette* in 1986, the *Gazette’s* circulation declined and the paper no longer dominated its highly competitive market. However, under the stewardship of a new editor, the publication saw an increase (from 64 percent to 73 percent) in local news coverage and a significant decline in national and international news. Specifically, the change meant an increase in coverage of politics/government, crime/accidents with a decline in human-interest coverage. “There was a large decrease in space allotted to general news, evidenced by a corresponding decline in average column inches devoted to all but one of the news categories analyzed by geographic orientation and topic category. ... There was also a marked increase in the average daily percentage of the newspaper devoted to local/state news, complemented by declines in national and international news coverage” (Plopper, 1991).

While the ownership of newspapers by chains continues to drive down the monies allocated for the production of the product in favor of driving up the profit margin, newspapers owned by publicly traded companies face higher hurdles. Newspapers owned by public companies, companies that tend to put shareholders and financiers above community, advertisers, readers and employees, often focus on short-term profitability as well as on consistency in return and earnings predictability. The more detached owners are from journalistic practice, the greater pressure they will apply on management for consistently high and growing profits

(Chang and Zeldes, 2002; Blankenburg and Ozanich, 1993; Lacy, Shaver and St. Cyr, 1996).

Summary

Agenda-setting as a formal concept will celebrate its 40th anniversary in 2012. In the four decades of research surrounding the concept, researchers have documented conclusions through case studies, through longitudinal studies, through cross-sectional studies and through experiments the correlation between public opinion and mass media coverage. Researchers have also brought in additional concepts and other factors, particularly interpersonal communication and real-world indicators, as they examined what influences public opinion. Researchers have made the conceptual leap between getting something on the public's agenda and moving from there to the policy agenda to instigate change in the community. They theorize that to have real impact, the media must do more than simply inform readers or viewers. In addition, the media must be instigators of change.

In his 1984 article, "The Frustrations of Government Service," Bruce Adams issued a challenge to the media: "The challenge for the press should not simply be to cut back on gossip and sensationalism but to make a commitment to presenting a more balanced view of public affairs — a view that would include stories of government programs that work and help people as well as those that do not, a description of government officials who make those programs work as well as those who do not." The media are on the minds of public administrators daily, with every decision they make or shy away from, because the decisions might not look good on the front page of the hometown newspaper.

For nearly four decades, researchers have focused almost blindly on public opinion, a concept they have difficulty defining and describing, and have generally neglected examining policy outcomes as a measure of the impact of the media. As Lippmann (1922) said, public opinion is irrational and includes often self-serving perceptions that influence individual behavior and prevent optimal social cohesion.

However, researchers seem infatuated with broadening understanding of this irrational, but still important, concept.

Moving beyond examining public opinion, the main theme of this research project is to broaden the bank of knowledge about agenda setting and its impact on policy and on tangible, rational change in a community. Thanks to the hundreds of research projects that have been undertaken during the last 25 years, leaders are aware that the mass media influence what consumers have knowledge of as well as what they know about the subject. The public can be certain of the direction of causality thanks to experiments done in the 1990s. However, citizens and leaders still know little about the impact of the media on local government policy outcomes. They need more information to answer the question, “Does media coverage of local issues influence the actions of local governments?” Evaluating a variety of potential factors that might influence the impact of any such change is the question at the center of this research. It will end in a challenge for public administrators: If the media do indeed impact policy changes at the local level as much as media outlets influence public opinion at the national level, administrators must become even more media savvy and must use all forms of media at their disposal to get information, to make well-informed decisions and to propose policies that are in their best interest of their communities, popular or not.

H1: Local coverage and policy change will be positively correlated.

H2: The size of a newspaper’s staff will correlate positively with policy change. The larger the size of the staff, the larger the positive correlation.

H3: The higher the quality of the newspaper as measured through market saturation, the higher the correlation between local coverage and policy change.

H4: Local newspapers with a Web presence will show a higher correlation between local coverage and policy change.

- H5a: Locally owned newspapers will have a stronger correlation between amount of coverage of local issues and policy change than newspapers owned by national chains.
- H5b: Local newspapers owned by the same company as the local television station will show a higher correlation between local coverage and policy change.

METHODOLOGY

The literature surrounding agenda setting is characterized by a wide array of research strategies, everything from the qualitative case study to the longitudinal study to the classical cross-sectional study such as the one used by McCombs and Shaw in their groundbreaking work. The cross-sectional study is widely used in agenda setting studies. It expands upon a case study approach while still looking at a snapshot in time. It provides a more doable option than the time-consuming and more expensive longitudinal studies by Smith (1987), Jordan (2003) and Mortensen and Serrizlew (2006).

This study, like so many before it, including almost half of the significant studies at the local level, will use the cross-sectional approach as its primary focus and first stage. Although not as ideal statistically as the quasi-experimental design used by researchers such as Soroka (2002), Cook, et. al. (1983), Protess, et. al. (1985) and Leff, et. al. (1986), the cross-sectional methodology, including use of a statistical correlation between data points, accounts for almost half of the agenda-setting studies at the local level (McCombs and Shaw, 1972; Jewel and Cunningham, 1968; Kim, Scheufle, Shanaham, 2002).

Still, the other common approach in agenda-setting studies, the case-study approach, while generally far from quantitative, has its merits and will be used in future research in conjunction with the explanation provided by the secondary independent variables (staff size, market saturation, Web presence and ownership) to provide a more robust look at the papers who have a significant impact on policy outcomes. Many cases studies, include examination of particular, and often sensational, issue-related decision-making processes, characterized by major shifts in the composition of the political agenda such as Martin Linsky's 1986 study of federal policy making. In short, the studies examined exceptional, "outlier" moments in media and politics such as presidential elections or new policies. While useful in that such studies provide insight into exceptional events, they shed little light on the

routine work of government or media (Mortensen and Serritzlew, 2006), but instead shine light on the most significant weakness of the case-study approach, its almost complete lack of generalizability and are beyond the scope of this initial research.

Peter Mortensen and Søren Serritzlew (2006) noted that most prior studies have focused on the initial phases of decision-making, the agenda-setting phases such as influencing public opinion, without investigating the media impact on outcomes. It may well be that political discussion and public opinion reflect the media agenda. However, while public opinion is critical to the process of policy change and agenda setting, it is not the outcome. Policy change is. To that end, this study examines both ends of the agenda-setting spectrum, media and policy. The intervening public opinion and the political agenda, which may easily be swayed by public opinion (but possibly not swayed far enough to make lasting changes) are not the focus here.

The Dependent Variable: Policy Change

If it is policy change that is really important, then, it becomes necessary to determine how to look at policy change. Examining one specific policy would be to fall into the trap of looking at some sensational or unique item on a local government's agenda. Examining only the number of policies changed would prove little other than the willingness of the government to make change regardless of reason.

Aaron Wildavsky (1979) agreed that the budget is a representation of "Who gets what government has to give?". The budget is the focus of the government's efforts. The budget is a representation in monetary terms of governmental activity. If politics is, in part, a conflict over who gets what, then the budget records the outcomes of this struggle. On the other hand, David Osborne (1993) said, government today consists of a lot of dedicated people trapped in bad systems— budget systems that provide incentives to waste money, personnel systems and civil service systems that are cumbersome and provide few incentives to be more efficient.

The easiest way to examine the budget would be to subtract the previous year's budget from the following year's budget. The dollar amount obtained would represent the change from the previous year. However, it would not account for increases or decreases in the overall budget that might be due to outside factors such as routine adjustments, tax increases or population changes. On the other hand, the percentage change used in this study, as opposed to the actual dollar amount, will make routine adjustment easier to identify and non-routine changes stand out.

While Census Bureau, the International City and County Manager Association (ICMA) and National League of Cities (NLC) may propose a model structure for a local government budget, there is no one, consistent template for a budget determining what goes in one line versus what goes in another and no single source for local government budgets. Choosing four distinct factors in the budget, items that appear in most, if not all, local municipality budgets in one form or another helps to ensure internal validity. Because the number and scope of governmental functions influence both revenues and expenditures, only factors common to all regions have been chosen for this study. For example, many Northeastern cities are responsible not only for general government functions but also for public education. However, in other states, education is a state function. Some local school districts have their own taxing authority and are independent agencies. Some cities are required by their states to assume more social welfare responsibilities than other cities. Cities also vary according to their revenue-generating authority. Some states, notably Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania, allow their cities to tax earnings and income. Other cities, notably those in Colorado, Louisiana, New Mexico and Oklahoma, depend heavily on sales tax revenues. Therefore, much of the statistical data presented here must also be understood within the context of cross-state variation in tax authority, functional responsibility and state laws (Hoene and Pagano, 2009).

Most city budgets have at least some common categories. They all have a budget line item for "administrative services." This line is often small in relation to other lines, including costs of the city manager's staff and council meetings. Most

cities included lines for public safety, parks/recreation, economic development and public works, lines that tended to be much larger, more controversial and which generated media coverage. The pieces that made up these aggregate items can also be informative in terms of what news coverage they generated. In public safety, for example, sometimes coverage of police and fire individually may generate coverage while “public safety” per se does not. So, the areas selected for this study partially mirror Meagan Jordan’s work (2003) and partially reflect the accessibility of modern local budgets, obtained from the governments themselves through online resources, and the line items they contain.

Dependent variables

- Change in public safety budget from previous year (continuous) [public safety change]
- Change in parks/recreation budget from previous year (continuous) [PRT change]
- Change in economic development budget from previous year (continuous) [development change]
- Change in public works budget from previous year (continuous) [public works change]

The Communities

The cities or counties chosen for research need to vary in size, geographic region and other characteristics to ensure some generalizability. As Steve Barkin (1987) said in his study of local television news, the emphasis is not on the distinctive characteristics of the cities chosen but on the generalizability of the local issues and concerns. However, they needed to be cities served primarily by one newspaper to avoid the confounding present in a major metropolitan town served by multiple newspapers, television stations and other media. The town’s budget information

must be readily accessible, preferably online,⁴ making it easy to access not only for researchers but to media outlets and citizens.

The first step in the selection of cities, town, townships, boroughs and villages (to use the terminology of the U.S. Census Bureau) was that they were included in the list of “local governments” — as opposed to states and federal entities. This included 19,494 municipalities in the 2007 list. Of them, 5,221 (26.8 percent) filed their Web site URL with the Bureau. This pool of 5,221 serves as the initial sample of local governments. The cities with URLs on file with the Bureau of the Census represented all sizes of municipalities (from populations ranging from 37 to 8,214,426) and all geographic regions of each state. There did not seem to be any bias in this sample.

This list will be matched with the communities that have newspapers in the EBSCO Newspaper Source Pro database. All of the communities that remain (appendix b) will comprise the next sample and will be examined for any bias.

The Media

The most conventional agenda-setting studies (and many other studies) make use of content analysis of the media in question (Krippendorff, 2004). For this study, the number of stories devoted to the particular topic during the time in question will be determined from a content analysis. Therefore, all of the newspapers being studied must be searchable using the EBSCO Newspaper Source Plus database⁵, a database that includes 906 media outlets. Because the database for newspapers allows for repetitive, repeatable searches of numerous local newspapers through a defined period of time, it will be used for this survey rather than searches of the

⁴ Google has created a search engine just for searching governmental sites at google.com/unclesam. In addition to the regular online searches, this should facilitate finding town budgets.

⁵ The EBSCO Host Newspaper Source Plus provides cover-to-cover full text for 35 national (U.S.) and international newspapers, including *The Christian Science Monitor*, *USA Today*, *The Washington Post*, *The Washington Times*, *The Times* (London), *Toronto Star*, etc. The database also contains selected full text for more than 275 regional (U.S.) newspapers, including *The Boston Globe*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Detroit Free Press*, *The Miami Herald*, *Daily News* (New York), *San Jose Mercury News*, etc. In addition, full text television and radio news transcripts are provided from CBS News, CNN, CNN International, FOX News, NPR, etc.

individual newspaper’s Web sites. The method of determining media coverage will follow Baumgartner and Jones (1993), who say, “When we want to know whether an issue is news, therefore, it is not difficult; we simply count the number of articles published in an index of media attention for a given year.” All U.S., non-national newspapers in the database with coverage back at least three years will be included in the study. Use of this database provides a foundation for the validity of this research; other research will be able to replicate the searches using the database. Because researchers working at different points in time and under different circumstances should get the same results, the research should be more reliable (Krippendorff, 2004).

From the Newspaper Source Plus database of 906 media outlets media outlets outside the United States were removed, reducing the sample to 450 searchable media outlets. Any media outlet that had fewer than three years of data online was then eliminated, leaving 241 outlets. Finally, any duplicates or large, regional papers were removed, leaving 162 media outlets that met all the criteria. The percentage of the newspapers kept in the study closely reflected the percentage of the population in that region. As noted in table 5, the largest region, as determined by the U.S. Bureau of the Census (see appendix a), had the largest percentage of papers in the sample and the smallest region had the smallest percentage of papers in the sample.

Table 5
Comparison of U.S. Newspapers and Population by Region

| Region⁶ | Omitted | Kept | Kept % | Population % |
|---------------------------|----------------|-------------|---------------|---------------------|
| 1 | 33 | 33 | 20.4% | 19.0% |
| 2 | 54 | 38 | 23.5% | 22.9% |
| 3 | 136 | 54 | 33.3% | 35.6% |
| 4 | 64 | 37 | 22.8% | 22.5% |
| Non-U.S. or non-print | 456 | | | |
| Total | 743 | 162 | | |

⁶ See appendix a for a detailed list of regions as identified by the Bureau of the Census.

The search terms revolving around the key words “public safety,” “parks and recreation,” “economic development” and “public works” mirror Jordan and, to a lesser degree, the analysis by Mortensen and Serritzlew or even Baumgartner and Jones who looked at nuclear power, tobacco and pesticides, not the entire national political process. These also represent items that a newspaper would cover not only when sensationalistic events happen but as part of routine coverage. Each one of the primary independent variables will be examined independently to see if they move together, indicating just general coverage of local issues, or independently, indicating that coverage of that one issue area is having more of an impact on policy outcomes. The cause of that difference will be an area ripe for future research.

Threats to Reliability and Validity

To ensure the consistency of the measures in this study, and therefore to ensure reliability, each of the variables has been clearly defined and the method used to obtain the data detailed. By using the same databases and sources for the media data and for the budget of each town, potential random error will be minimized. That there is no single source for local municipality budgets is a potential threat to reliability and could question whether the measurements of a test remain consistent over repeated tests. This will be minimized by using one source for the budget of each town, the town itself, minimizing the chance that future researchers would obtain different data.

As is apparent in all statistics, however, just because a study is reliable, measuring the relationship between policy change and media coverage consistently, does not mean it is actually measuring that relationship. Researchers have identified some nine threats to internal validity: history, maturation, testing, instrumentation, statistical regression, selection of subjects, experimental mortality, selection-maturation interaction, and the John Henry Effect (Yu and Ohlund, 2010; Campbell and Stanley, 1963; Shadish, Cook and Campbell, 2002).

Because this study is not experimental in design, uses third-party data, and does not use pre-test/post-test methodology, it is not likely that there will be a testing bias. Using data from the census, EBSCO database and town budgets, should avoid problems caused by selection of the subjects on the basis of novelty such as is often a problem with agenda-setting case studies. Avoiding an experimental design also avoids problems with selection-maturation interaction and the John Henry effect when the treatment itself changes the outcome.

Five of the potential threats, however, are potential threats to this study: selection bias, instrumentation changes, history, maturation and subject mortality. The first, and perhaps most significant, is selection bias. The towns and selection of the media are both subject to selection bias. The media outlets are chosen because they are a part of the EBSCO database, a selective, not-all-inclusive database. Although not apparent on the surface, those newspapers that choose to use EBSCO may have some commonalities biasing the sample. To avoid too small of a sample size, all of the local papers (not the national or large regional papers) in the database will be used in the research, at least initially. From the available newspapers, then, the towns those newspapers serve will be examined. If that town's budget is not available, it will be eliminated from the study. Since department-level data was not available on municipal budgets from a single source such as the International City/County Managers Association, Census Bureau, the League of Municipalities or any other group, each budget will have to be examined to obtain comparable data. Towns that have their budgets available electronically may share some common characteristics of openness that might influence the outcome of the study but that are difficult to measure. While collecting budget data, control variables will be used to ensure that the final sample of towns represents a representative sample of municipalities in the U.S.

A second threat to validity is the historical aspect of the study. Even a study over one or two years could be subject to history effects. For example, the municipalities studied could have undergone a change in leadership making them

more or less susceptible to media influences. For example, the local media might have undergone a change in ownership, influencing the type and depth of coverage on that papers' staff. To combat this potential threat, the study will be conducted over a short time period. A more longitudinal methodology provides potential for future research.

Third, it is also possible that changes in technology, instrumentation in the vernacular of the academic study, might influence the study. Even over the few years in which this study has evolved, towns have become more likely to post their budgets online and to make more and more material accessible through their own media outlets rather than relying on the mass media. And mass media outlets have become more likely to post more material online on their own Web sites as well as the EBSCO databases. As more material is available through sources other than the local newspaper, it becomes more difficult to attribute any change to the chief instrument of this study, the local newspaper. However, the same information that might be more available to the general public is available to the mass media. And just because it is available does not mean anyone will go looking for the town budget or drafts of policies. The local newspaper still serves to provide people with information they never knew was there.

Finally, maturation and mortality are similar problems that could pose potential threats to this study. For example, a newspaper may improve its online coverage during the time of the study or may change staff unknowingly causing a change in focus for or against coverage of local issues. In addition, a newspaper could actually cease publication during the study forcing it to be eliminated. Those that continue publishing may be more responsive to their readership and may, therefore, bias the outcome of the study.

Because the study makes use of external data, it is not subject to testing bias but could fall prey to threats to external validity since it is not experimental in design (Campbell and Stanley, 1963). As a cross-sectional study and not a case study provides for some randomization and increases the potential for generalizability. By

choosing towns and media outlets following the stated criteria and by controlling for some potential external factors, this study should safely allow for the generalization of the sample studied to local municipalities and the newspapers that serve those communities.

Coverage and policy change

H1: Local coverage and policy change will be positively correlated.

Independent variables

- Change in number of stories regarding public safety (police, fire, EMS, public safety, crime) from previous year (continuous) [public safety story change]
- Change in number of stories regarding parks/recreation (parks, recreation) from previous year (continuous) [PRT story change]
- Change in number of stories regarding economic development (economic development) from previous year (continuous) [development story change]
- Change in number of stories regarding public works (public works, water purification, sewage treatment, trash collection, road maintenance, construction) from previous year (continuous) [public works story change]

Keeping mind all the potential problems with reliability and validity, to identify the number of sources in each publication, the EBSCO database will be searched for the terms in question. The online database allows searches for individual media within a defined time period. So, for each of the content analysis independent variables, the database will be searched using the appropriate terms, ensuring consistency between media for each fiscal year. For example, for the public safety independent variable, the database will be searched using “police,” “fire,” “EMS,” “public safety” or “crime.” The number of stories found with any one of those

terms will give the value for that variable to be correlated with the dependent variable, looking for the direction and amount of correlation.

Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw (1972) found correlations as high as +0.967 between main campaign issues carried by the media and voter's independent judgments of what were the important issues. When it came to an abstract, national issue such as the environment, one study even found a perfect correlation (+1.0) between the relative salience of the environment's attributes in the newspaper and among the public (Maher, 1996). Yet these were not the only studies with high correlations. Indeed, it is such high correlations in repeated studies over decades that have led to the validity of the agenda-setting hypothesis. Marc Benton and P. Jean Frazier (1976) found an especially high correlation (+0.81) between the newspaper agenda and the public agenda on the general topic of the economy. Maria Jose Canel, Juan Pablo Llamas and Federico Rey (1996) found that six major concerns on the public agenda matched local coverage with correlations as high as +0.90 depending on the newspaper. Federico Rey Lennon (1998) found a correlation of +0.60 between the public agenda and the newspaper and of +0.71 between the public agenda and television. Toshio Takeshita (1993), looking at four individual areas and the public agenda published some of the lowest correlations in the literature — +0.39. Wayne Wanta and Salma Ghanem (2007), in a limited meta-analysis of 90 agenda-setting studies, found an overall mean correlation of +0.53 and 95 percent confidence intervals of $0.47 \leq 0.53 \leq 0.59$. Correlation remains the choice of researchers studying agenda setting.

Although prevalent, correlation as a methodology is not without its problems. As pointed out in the introduction, the correlation (whether high or low) may also be due to other factors. The absence of correlation between media coverage may conceal actual media impact if that impact is offset by prior audience differences and the appearance of correlation may be spurious if it merely reflects parallel audience and/or context differences. The role of the media must be taken in context with other potential agenda setters.

Most of the studies with high correlations, however, looked at the correlation between public opinion of what was important with content analysis of the news media. It follows, based on the model, that correlations would be lower as the media became further removed from the outcome. Since policy changes follow the political agenda which follows the public agenda, they would have the lowest correlations with the media agenda. Regardless of how weak it is, it will be significant, showing that media coverage does have some (positive) impact on policy outcomes. Another of the pitfalls of correlation as a technique is that it does not provide a direction. Correlation is symmetrical. While it is the standard method in use for more than 30 years in agenda-setting studies and is used by the vast majority of the studies of agenda-setting except the ones using case study methodology, it provides only clues for causation not determination.

Despite these statistical limitations, correlation remains the accepted methodology for many agenda-setting studies particular when the direction of causation cannot be part of the study (the base model points that causation may indeed be bi-directional and correlation most appropriately allows for this), resources do not permit an experimental approach or time does not permit a longitudinal study. Statistical methodology examining the primary variable and the secondary independent variables will comprise part of the study with some more qualitative work providing a closer look at cases of interest identified in the qualitative work.

Organizational variables

With this study, the most interesting comparison is that between coverage and policy change. However, coverage, as indicated by the number of stories in that area, is not the only variable of interest. As James Lani (2008) says, “Very rarely – if ever – is it the case that only one variable is responsible for values of another variable.” Other moderating variables help to account for the relationship between the policy outcome, the budget, and the coverage. They influence the strength of a

relationship between the two other variables. These moderating variables, including staff size, market saturation, online presence, media ownership, and existing relationships with other local media, will inevitably have some influence on policy outcomes (Baron and Kenny, 1986; Tabachnick, 2001).

Size of staff

H2: The size of a newspaper's staff will be correlated positively with policy change. The larger the size of the staff, the larger the positive correlation.

Independent variables

- Size of staff in second year (continuous) [staff size]

Media outlets tend to have short attention spans (Downs, 1972; Kingdon, 2003). It is no quantum leap to hypothesize that a newspaper that has the resources to dedicate reporters to beats will have reporters that get to know their sources better and, ultimately, produce more in-depth, well-researched articles. With more staff, they can spend more time on a story. Not only will they get to know when things are going well in an area, they will know when things are amiss and can inform the public. Newspapers that can allocate even more than one person, say a team of reporters, photographers and editors, on a specific issue or topic can produce even better coverage, particularly more community-based coverage (Russial, 1997; Morgan, 1993; and Johnson, 1993). To fill the pages, smaller staffs often have to rely on "wire" copy while larger staffs can produce more locally generated copy about local actors and issues.

David Demers (1996) used staff size as part of his structural complexity index, looking at the number of full-time employees (38.25/mean), number of full-time reporters/editors (184.62/mean) and even the number of beats that employ full-time reporters (5.30/mean). Similarly, Lee Becker (1978, p. 108) looked at the number of full-time employees, part-time employees, and even the gender, salary, staff turnover and education of those employees to show that "The number and kind of editorial

staffers hired, their training and experience, and the salary given them all predict to press performance.”

Philip Meyer and Minjeong Kim (2003) asked a simple question: “How many news-editorial staff members does it take to produce a viable newspaper?” To answer the question posed by Meyer and Kim and to test newspaper “folklore” that there should be one news-editorial staff member for each 1,000 circulation, Meyer and Kim obtained staff size information not normally released from the American Society of Newspaper Editors and circulation figures from the Audit Bureau of Circulation, excluding newspapers that were not in either list. They found that the folklore is not far from the truth. The mean news-editorial staff rate for 1995 was 1.04 and increased to 1.18 by 2000. Through their regression analysis, the authors ultimately showed that, although the effect size was small, 5.8 percent, a one-unit increase in staff per thousand results in a circulation increase of 7.427 percent. While they acknowledge that increasing staff size alone cannot stop a circulation decline, they do also show that the top 9 percent of newspapers have the highest staff/circulation ratio. “An enlarged news-ed staff creates benefit as well as cost. The investment analysts who see a newspaper as a platform for delivering eyeballs to advertisers in the cheapest manner possible should think about what attracts those eyeballs to the platform” (Meyer and Kim, 2003).

For this study, three methods will be used to determine the size of the staff in the year’s studied. The first will be the *Editor and Publisher International Yearbook* that lists staff members. This will be supported with the newspaper’s Web site. However, both are problematic. The *Yearbook* may not list the entire staff, listing only key personnel instead. Since what one staff lists as “key” personnel may differ from what another lists, this may serve as nothing more than a reliable lists of contacts and way to determine if there has been a change in key personnel during the years in question. The second will be the newspaper’s Web site. However, this too is problematic as it is probably accurate for the current year but will not reflect changes in the staff during past years. To that end, this variable may necessitate contacting a

top manager to determine the size of the staff during the years in question. A contact in human resources or in the editor's office will know how many people worked at the paper during the years in question and will ensure that the numbers are comparable between the years in question at least for that paper.

Market Saturation

H3: The higher the quality of the newspaper as measured through circulation, the higher the correlation between local coverage and policy change.

Independent variables

- Market saturation = circulation/population [market saturation]

Entire books have been written and Web sites devoted to the declining circulation of the printed newspaper. Since 1940, the Newspaper Association of America has tracked the circulation of morning, evening and Sunday newspapers as well as the total number of newspapers in the market. In 2003, there were, according to the Newspaper Association of America 1,456 morning or evening daily newspapers in the United States, about 100 fewer papers than 10 years prior. In the same year, there were 6,704 weekly newspapers, down less than 200 from 1996 (the first year tallied). The combined circulation of the weekly newspapers was more than 50 million in 2003 (Newspaper Association of America, 2004). And since 1964, the Newspaper Association of America has tracked readership (circulation in relation to population). Similarly, the Audit Bureau of Circulations reports the official total circulation of newspapers. These circulation figures have become the official numbers on which newspaper success is measured, and they are declining. They are also the circulation figures on which advertising rates are based. The more readers a newspaper reaches, the more than can charge for advertising. A drop in official circulation means a drop in advertising revenues. For example, the *Monroe Enquirer-Journal* (Union County, North Carolina) has an average daily circulation of 7,666. All other things being equal, it could not charge as much for advertising as

the Greenville *Reflector* (Pitt County, North Carolina) that has a daily circulation of 20,709 according to the Audit Bureau of Circulation. The Greenville paper reaches 13,043 people per day more than the Monroe paper.

However, circulation alone does not tell the whole picture. Monroe has a population of 31,663 and Greenville has a population of 76,058. Therefore, Monroe's newspaper reaches 24 percent of the population and the Greenville paper reach 27 percent. When population is taken into account, the papers reach about the same percentage of their community. A paper that reaches a higher percentage of the market is more likely to inform and to motivate citizens, to change public opinion and to influence policy change. While it cannot take into account how many people read an individual copy of a paper or how many people read the paper online, market saturation will be used in this research as a proxy for quality and as a way to assess the likelihood a paper will influence a significant segment of the population.

Beyond just being an indicator of how many papers are being sold or what part of the market the paper is reaching, market saturation, too, is a measure of quality. "It makes sense that the larger the number of people buying a newspaper, the larger the number of people who perceive it to have at least a minimal level of quality" (Lacy and Fico, 1991). In their study, Stephen Lacy and Frederick Fico took circulation and city population figures from the *Editor and Publisher International Yearbook* (which is what this research uses), stratified the sample by monopoly newspapers, competitive newspapers and papers with a joint operating agreement and then did a content analysis on the papers for one week to create a quality index originally developed by Lee Bogart in 1997⁷. They found there was a significant relationship between news quality and newspaper circulation ($r = 0.373$). "If a newspaper's circulation is related to its journalistic quality, as indicated by this and previous studies, it is in the managers' and owners' interest to invest in such quality" (Lacy and Fico, 1991).

⁷ Bogart's news quality index used z-scores for seven content measures: total amount of non-advertising content in the news section, the ratio of non-advertising to advertising content in the news section, the length of all stories in the news section, the ratio of in-depth copy to hard news copy, the number of wire services carried, ratio of staff written to wire copy in the news section, the ratio of visual content to copy.

Gerald Stone and his associates (1981) also acknowledged that while a superior journalistic product is associated with a greater circulation level, it is not the only factor. “Quality can be said to account for at least 3.4 percent of the explained variance in total circulation....” They found that, even with community size is partially controlled, the size of the community had more of an impact on circulation than quality. That is why, for this study, market saturation (circulation/city size) will partially control for this variable.

Web Presence

H4: Local newspapers with a Web presence will show a higher correlation between local coverage and policy change.

Independent variables

- Does paper have a Web site with content (not just business information)? (dichotomy: yes or no) [web presence]

According to the Newspaper Association of America, circulation in 2007 was as low as it was in 1977, having peaked in the early 1990s — before the World Wide Web became commonplace (Newspaper Association of America, 2008). The NAA is not the only group to report the demise of the printed newspaper in favor of online media. Philip Meyer predicts that by 2043, daily newspapers will run out of readers. He cites lack of timeliness as the primary cause of declining readership. “The Internet...(gives) seekers of specialized information an increasingly efficient source. Why would you look up yesterday’s closing price of your favorite stock in the newspaper when you can find the last half-hour’s price on the Internet. (The newspaper)...is no longer the most efficient way to appeal to those interests” (Meyer, 2004).

Major metropolitan newspapers including papers such as *the New York Times* and *Washington Post* have taken a leadership role in online media, taking advantage of the instantaneousness of it, the ability to provide readers with up-to-the-second

updates as well as the ability to provide moving pictures and in-depth coverage with small incremental costs. Local newspapers, however, have been slow to jump on the bandwagon. It was not until around 2000, nearly a decade after newspapers began producing online, that the average weekly newspaper began publishing online, according to one study (Adams, 2007). Only a few years later, by 2004, according to the Newspaper Association of America, more than 5,000 daily, weekly and newspapers had an online presence.

Because more and more users are getting their news online, examining whether a newspaper has an online presence seems a logical extension of this study. By having the local news online, it would be accessible to more people and therefore more likely to influence their decisions. Further, because online news remains easily accessible for a longer period of time than a newspaper which might be recycled the next day, more people than just subscribers might read the stories pertaining to local government. So, newspapers with an online presence will have more impact on policy changes.

While the growth of the World Wide Web may supplement or replace printed editions, particularly the large city newspaper, it would be negligent to say that there is consensus in any part of the industry about the future of the printed edition. Even Ben Bagdikian (2004), one of the industry's harshest critics, does not believe the local newspaper will go away because of the unique role papers play in the community. "Newspapers have not yet disappeared, nor are they likely to in the near future. ... Newspapers have a unique social function that their media competitors do not. These social functions are likely to extend the life and solvency of the printed newspaper and keep it a substantial presence in the media scene for many years."

While it is a logical extension of the research, this dichotomous variable presents its own statistical problems. As David Garson (2009) says, "it is common to use dichotomies in interval-level techniques like correlation and regression," using this dichotomous variable (among the others in use in this study) presents potential statistical problems. In this case, there are varying levels of quality of a Web site for a

newspaper. The paper may have no Web site (0). Or it may have a Web site, but that Web site contains only information about the business, no content (also 0). Beyond that, the paper may choose to put only some articles up online, perhaps only objective pieces and no editorials (which can have a profound impact on public discussion) or no letters/commentary. For this study, if the paper puts any content up online it receives a 1, not a 0 regardless of what was put up online or when. In effect, this is a Likert-type scale with only two values. This abbreviated scale, which assumes interval data but with ordinal Likert scale items, does not seem to affect Type I and Type II errors dramatically for many statistical tests (Jaccard and Wan, 1996). With all of the non-continuous variables in this study, it will be important to examine the factor loadings to assess whether common loading reflects substantive correlation (Garson, 2009).

Ownership

H5a: Locally owned newspapers will have a stronger correlation between amount of coverage of local issues and policy change than newspapers owned by national chains.

Independent variables

- Is newspaper part of a chain? (dichotomy: yes or no) [chain]

H5b: Local newspapers owned by the same company as the local television station will show a higher correlation between local coverage and policy change.

Independent variables

- Is newspaper owned by same company as local television station? (dichotomy: yes or no) [ownership]

Only a few cities left in America have competitive newspapers. In fact, 99.9 percent of morning papers are monopolies in their own cities and face competition largely from television stations, not other print media. Five chains own the majority

of daily newspapers in America and many smaller papers: Gannett, McClatchy, Advance Publications (Newhouse) and the New York Times Company. Smaller group such as Morris Communications, Community Newspaper Holdings, Inc., Freedom Communications, Lee Enterprise, Belo and Scripps, Cox Newspapers, the MediaNews Group and Hearst own hundreds of mid-sized and small papers. Fewer than 275 of the nation's 1,500 daily newspapers remain independently owned (Bagdikian, 2004; Free Press Action Fund, 2008).

Bagdikian insists that the downfall of the modern media will be corporate conglomerations. Yet other research insists that chain-owned and monopoly newspapers do not differ much from independent newspapers. Demers (1996) showed that corporate ownership can free reporters to focus on writing and reporting rather than just filling pages. "Corporate newspapers publish more local editorials and letters to the editor, and a larger number and proportion of editorials and letters that are critical of mainstream groups and institutions." Demers examined papers that were incorporated businesses, publicly owned, owned by a chain/group, and papers where one family/individual does not own 50 percent interest. He hypothesized, and showed, that corporate newspapers publish editorials that are more critical of mainstream groups because the papers are more likely to be located in pluralistic communities that contain more criticism of dominant groups and value systems. Further, they are more insulated from local political pressures. Randy Beam (1998) showed that market-oriented newspapers, those with a focus on customer (both advertisers and readers) wants and needs are not less committed to public affairs content or general journalistic excellence. "A strong commitment to identifying and seeking to meet reader' wants and needs is not tantamount to pandering to readers." In contrast, Becker (1978) found that "the large papers, those with large news holes to fill, and those which are part of large media corporations, are better newspapers than those with small circulation, small news holes and which are individually owned."

While Bagdikian's argument is compelling, often-cited, and criticized, it is

also incomplete. He argues that the money-hungry owners make the media conservative, not liberal yet fails to explain why any media outlet would knowingly bias its coverage. He fails to recognize that there is a distinct separation between corporate ownership and the media personnel who create the content of the mass media. Still, his arguments are also indicative of the prevailing public opinion regarding the mass media and are the basis for the hypotheses in this research.

Also at the foundation of this part of the research is the declining number of media owners and owners that now operate print and broadcast media in a single community. The *Tampa Tribune* owns WFAL-TV, an NBC affiliate in the same market, indeed in the same building. Until it split into two companies, one for television/new media and one for newspapers, Belo owned both the *Dallas Morning-News* and WFAA, a television station operating out of an adjacent building in the one of the nation's largest markets. In any given market, formal relationship or not, their relationship is even more "incestuous" as Michael Rosenblum (2008) said. "Almost every local TV news station starts its day by opening up the local newspaper. That is where TV news gets its stories from. They let the local paper do the hard work, and they simply lift the results." And with the corporate owners looking for ways to save money, having the broadcast media and print media share stories seems efficient and effective even if it does reduce the check and balance on the gatherers of the news.

Control variables

- Population of city in second year
- Region
- Frequency of publication

The primary independent variables and moderating variables should go a long way in explaining the impact of coverage on policy outcomes if not the actual causation. In all studies, some items are beyond the interest of the researcher but inevitably account for some of the change in the dependent variable. Other studies

often use variables such as gender, age, race, education or as control variables, variables held constant so as not to influence the outcome. “Utilizing the control variable will do a great deal to silence the critics of your research that may attribute the differences you found to the existence of some extraneous, unidentified, and unaccounted for variable” (Lani, 2008).

This study uses population in the municipalities studied as a control variable. While population is also accounted for in the independent, moderating variable market saturation (circulation/population), it is also important statistically to control for population changes independently.

The Bureau of the Census divides the United States into four regions: Northeast, Midwest, South and West (see appendix a). Because Census Bureau data will be used for population, the same source will be used for U.S. region to see if there are any differences by region.

The final control will be a dichotomous variable regarding the frequency of publication: daily or non-daily.

The Relationship

To investigate the agenda-setting capacity of the local media, this study attempts to correlate what city governments passed as policy in terms of the budget with the actual content of the local media used during the same time frame. While this is not a long-term, longitudinal study, meaning it will be difficult to prove causation, there is so little work in agenda setting at the local level, even a small step is a step in the right direction. With some 400 studies on agenda setting at the national level, it will take more than a dozen studies to build enough literature to determine how, or if, agenda setting works at the local level. By choosing towns and cities of varying sizes and in varying geographic areas and by choosing a variety of cases chosen the findings of the study will be generalizable even when the sample size limits its generalizability. The first part of the findings in this study will look at the relationship between the budget and the newspaper coverage, generally

replicating other agenda-setting studies but using multiple policies, not just one case as many others have done.

Despite some ambiguity, researchers over the years have generally accepted that mass media coverage can, and often does, affect the political agenda. However, from a policy perspective, this conclusion does not tell us very much. We do not know much about the strength of the media influence on political decisions. It is not clear whether institutional, political or economic factors magnify or diminish the effects of media coverage (Mortensen and Serritzlew, 2006).

When McCombs and Shaw completed their original study, they used intercorrelations between issues and voter emphasis (public opinion) and found extremely high intercorrelations, +0.967 between main campaign issues carried by the media and voter's independent judgments of what were the important issues. A similar methodology will be used here, testing the correlation between coverage and policy change in four areas: public safety, parks and recreation, economic development and public works. This methodology, looking at a snapshot of a community at one point in time may prove correlation is symmetrical and does little to prove causation, a weakness of the original studies that was corrected in later studies at the national level and in a Danish study. In their time-analysis study of Danish municipalities over a 13-year period, Mortensen and Serritzlew (2006) went one step further and assessed changes in spending per citizen and media coverage, getting at causation as much as correlation. They found little significant impact of the media on local government budgets over a 13-year period.

The longitudinal nature of their study allowed Mortensen and Serritzlew to look at causation which routine examination of correlation does not, but being unable to determine causation is not the only problem faced when using correlation, an indication of the strength of the (linear) relationship between the variables. The first potential problem depends on the strength of the model, a model tested in various other research projects. The strength of the model should prevent the coefficients being found significant by chance alone. The strength of this study is

based in no small part on the strength of the model as substantiated by findings as indicated in the literature review. A second potential problem is also negated by the strength of the model. If other variables not accounted for in the model also cause the dependent variable, policy change, then any covariance they share with any given independent variable may incorrectly be attributed to that independent. Finally, because correlation assumes a linear relationship between the variables, if the relationship is, instead, non-linear, correlation will understate the relationship (Garson, 2009).

Over time, various researchers have found that media coverage precedes public opinion and policy outcomes. However, as indicated the vast majority of the research shows only a relationship, not the direction of the relationship. This is a weakness of most of the studies, including this one. Over the short term, as the model indicates, media coverage can lead to public opinion change which can result in policy change. However, it's also likely, especially over an extended time period, that policy change can result in media coverage. When researchers study extended time periods, indeed, it is possible that feedback occurs in both directions. While the literature shows that public officials use the media and other sources to get items for potential policy change on their agenda as the policy changes mature, it is just as likely that policy change results in further media coverage.

After examining the relationship between the coverage and changes in the budget, this study will examine other variables that might have an impact on budget changes: newspaper staff size, market saturation, Web presence, ownership and co-ownership with local broadcast media. While these variables are not the major focus of the study, policy change is, they might provide some insights into the factors that cause that policy change beyond just coverage in the local print media.

Table 6
Hypotheses and Variables Used in this Study

| Number | Hypothesis | Type of Variable | Variable |
|---------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | Dependent variable | Continuous | Change in public safety budget from previous year |
| | Dependent variable | Continuous | Change in parks/recreation budget from previous year |
| | Dependent variable | Continuous | Change in economic development budget from previous year |
| | Dependent variable | Continuous | Change in public works budget from previous year |
| | Control | Continuous | Population of city |
| | Control | Discrete | One of four U.S. regions |
| | Control | Dichotomy | Daily/non-daily |
| H1 | Local coverage and policy change will be positively correlated. | Continuous | Change in number of stories regarding public safety from previous year Change in number of stories regarding parks/recreation from previous year Change in number of stories regarding economic development from previous year Change in number of stories regarding public works from previous year |
| H2 | The size of a newspaper's staff will be correlated positively with policy change. The larger the size of the staff, the larger the positive correlation | Continuous | Size of staff in second year |
| H3 | The higher the quality of the newspaper as measured through market saturation, the higher the correlation between local coverage and policy change | Continuous | Market saturation = circulation/population |

Table 6 Continued

| | | | |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| H4 | Local newspapers with a Web presence will show a higher correlation between local coverage and policy change. | Dichotomy | Web site with content (not just business information) or not |
| H5a | Locally owned newspapers will have a stronger correlation between amount of coverage of local issues and policy change than newspapers owned by national chains. | Dichotomy | Locally owned or not |
| H5b | Local newspapers owned by the same company as the local television station will show a higher correlation between local coverage and policy change. | Dichotomy | Owned by same parent company or not |

INITIAL FINDINGS

In the early 1970s, researchers examining national issues showed that by ignoring some problems and attending to others the mass media profoundly affect which problems readers, viewers and listeners take seriously. Since then, more than 400 case studies, content analyses, quasi-experiments and other studies have shown that news coverage is a significant predictor of shifts in public opinion (Funkhouser, 1973; McCombs and Shaw, 1993; Page and Shapiro, 1992; Weaver, McCombs and Spellman, 1975). The vast majority of the qualitative work, including the pivotal work by McCombs and Shaw and subsequent studies, involved the use of correlations to determine if there was a relationship between media coverage and public opinion. In that sense, this research is no different, using correlation as the primary method of statistical analysis. The results in this chapter, primarily, reveal those relationships.

Further, this chapter expands the research beyond public opinion, examining the relationship between media coverage and policy outcomes, just as researchers such as Robert Spitzer (1993) did when they discussed how media outlets play a pivotal role in influencing policy because they regulate the flow of communication between policymakers and others in the political system. Case study after case study showed how, in specific, highly publicized and controversial decisions, the media can impact policy outcomes. Expanding on this work, in a quantitative, longitudinal study, Peter Mortensen and Søren Serritzlew (2006) concluded that the media may affect political discussions and certain political decisions, but the budgets and broader policy priorities remain largely unaffected. Their quantitative study used yearly net operating expenditures during 13 years in 191 municipalities to examine whether media pressure had an impact on budgetary decisions. “Almost no observable effects of media pressure are found, either generally or in favorable political, economic or institutional settings.” However, most of the previous research was either overseas, involved isolated instances or large, regional media outlets.

There remains little research on local newspapers and their impact on policy outcomes. So, this chapter reveals the relationship between budgets of local governments in the United States and coverage in the community newspapers in the EBSCO Newspaper Source Pro database. The findings reveal little relationship between newspaper coverage in the short-term and only a relatively small relationship over the longer term. While newspaper coverage might indeed influence public opinion, it seems to do little to influence the ultimate opinions of policy makers. Even when results were significant statistically, effect sizes were small.

Finally, this chapter examines the other variables used in the study including ownership, online presence and staff size.

Descriptive Data

Before jumping into the details of the relationship between the towns, their policy outcomes and media coverage, it is useful to have a picture of the towns and media studied including population and circulation characteristics that led to market saturation statistics. The descriptive statistics shed some light on the characteristics of the towns and their newspapers (appendices a, b and c).

The local newspapers had an average circulation of 44,437 in 2010, down from close to 55,000 10 years earlier, a decline of nearly 19 percent in less than decade (figure 5) and a decline of 13 percent between 2000 and 2009. This was similar to circulation data from the Newspaper Association of America that showed a decline of 17 percent from 2000 until 2009, the latest year for which comparable, comprehensive data was available (Newspaper Association of America, 2011). Data from the Audit Bureau of Circulation showed a 5 percent decline in the first months of 2010 and 10.6 percent in 2009 (Peters, 2010). The NAA data showed a strong correlation ($r=0.97^{**}$) with the newspapers in the sample group, but it is possible that the papers in the sample were part of the NAA data set. Larger papers, the top half in the study, saw a decrease in circulation of 18 percent over the decade while smaller papers, the bottom half in the study, saw a decrease of 24 percent. As

newspapers reach fewer and fewer people, the potential impact on public opinion and policy outcomes declines. Because its circulation declines are exaggerated in the smaller communities, reaching up to a decline of one-fourth of market share, lack of coverage might mean that media outlets have even less of an impact in smaller communities.

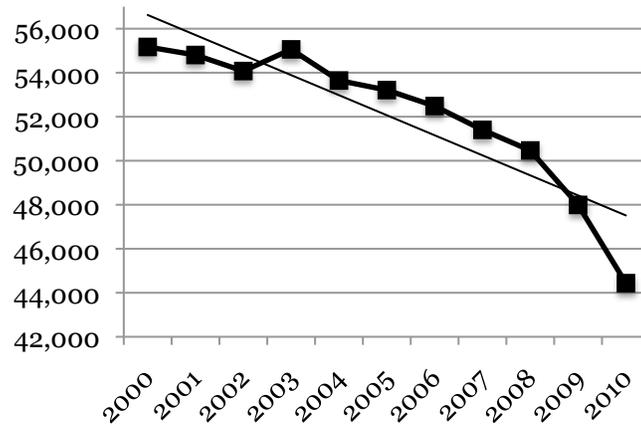


Figure 5: Average Circulation of Newspapers Used in this Study over the Last Decade.

In contrast to the circulation declines, the towns, in 2010, had an average population of 108,052 that increased at a rate of about 6.2 percent over the decade (figure 6). This was roughly comparable to a 9.7 percent increase nationally between the national census in 2000 and the 2010 census. The 2010 Census reported 308.7 million people in the United States, a 9.7 percent increase from the Census 2000 population of 281.4 million with the largest growth (14.3 percent) occurring in the South (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011).

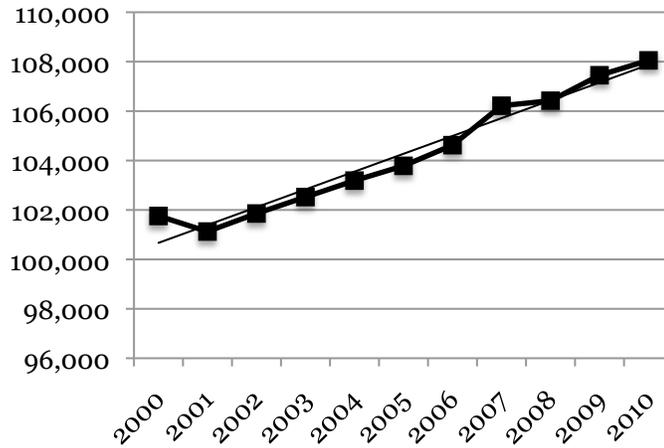


Figure 6: Average Population of Towns Used in this Study over the Last Decade. Provided by the U.S. Census Bureau.

As expected, the population of the town was strongly correlated to the circulation of the newspaper ($r=0.67^{**}$). The larger the town, the higher the circulation of the newspaper. Population explained about 45 percent of the variance in circulation and that relationship was highly significant. That strong correlation and high significance helps to validate the use of market share as a combination of both population and circulation in the final analysis. Similarly, papers with larger circulations required larger staffs. This relationship was also strong ($r=0.70^{**}$) and highly significant. The circulation explained 49 percent of the variance in staff size. Decline in circulation can certainly explain part of the decrease in staff size over the past decade, but part of it can also be attributed, intuitively, to improvements in technology that require fewer people to produce the same number of pages and the changes in ownership that demand higher profit margins. Similarly, local ownership seems to explain about 2 percent of the variance in circulation ($r=0.18^*$).

The Budget

The first relevant finding related to the budgets of the cities and towns in this study was the relative inaccessibility of the budgets themselves despite increased use of websites and online media to distribute financial information. No source compiles

the disaggregated budgets of local governments. The U.S. Census Bureau provides online links to many of the cities, towns, counties and other forms of the 89,527 governments (everything from cities to school districts). The inaccessibility of such data is perhaps one primary work for scarcity of work in local budgeting. Hence, each local government included in this research had to provide their budget for the last several years (usually available to anyone through online resources). From the budgets the individual items had to be pulled and compared with previous years. The aggregate budget was not useful because the total allocation for a municipality has more to do with population growth than any policy change. As McCombs (2004) says, “[T]he strength of agenda-setting effects can vary from issue to issue.” He adds, “The intense competition among issues for a place on the agenda is the most important aspect of this process. At any moment there are dozens of issues competing for public attention. But no society and its institutions can attend to more than a few issues at a time. The resource of attention in the news media, among the public, and in our various public institutions is a very scarce one.”

While most towns made their budgets accessible either online or by e-mail, another challenge in obtaining the information was government officials themselves. Some, like the director of finance for Willoughby, Ohio, would not release the town’s budget without an expensive and time-consuming public records request. While that town publishes the Certified Annual Financial Report as mandated by the state government online, it did not publish an of its budget information online in advance of the council’s approval or even after approval. And, in Indiana, the clerk/treasurer of Seymour reports that “the actual budgets never get published.” He said, “...[W]e are required to advertise a document that shows the potential changes in the amount of tax levies for each fund. To the average citizen, I’m sure this is totally non-informative.” He also said the local newspaper might report on potential changes in the tax levy, since that is the information provided by the town, the paper does not report on the budget. Indeed, he said his town is “blessed” by the lack of interest in the town’s budget or budget process (Lewis, 2011). Both of these cities were removed

from the pool of cities studied because the budget information was ultimately unobtainable.

Nevertheless, as Mortensen and Serritzlew (2006) indicated, the public budgets provide a condensed measure of policy and, indeed, the only generally accessible vehicle for such a study. With the budgets over several years from nearly 150 towns in hand, the first anecdotal finding that became apparent was that towns were worried about meeting their financial obligations. A report from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (McNichol and Johnson, 2010) found, “The worst recession since the 1930s has caused the steepest decline in state tax receipts on record.... When all is said and done, states will have dealt with a total budget shortfall of some \$375 billion for 2010 and 2011.... The federal assistance to states provided in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act is lessening the extent to which states need to reduce services or raise taxes. But it now appears likely the federal assistance will end before state budget gaps have abated.”

A report issued by the National League of Cities and Brookings Institution in 2009 found that “Nearly nine in 10 city finance officers ... report difficulties meeting fiscal needs in 2009. In aggregate, these cities face nearly 3 percent budget shortfalls on average this year. And the sense of trepidation is ubiquitous across a diverse range of metros, regardless of which aspect of the national crisis impacts them the most: declining consumption rates and increased property foreclosures; job losses in manufacturing or financial services; or record state budget shortfalls. Yet this is only the beginning of what will likely be a slow-moving crisis. ...[C]ities and other localities will be contending with increasing budget pressure for the next several years.” A Brookings Institution report of the 100 largest metropolitan areas in America revealed similar findings (Wial, et. al., 2011).

However, despite all the discussion of the Great Recession that began in December of 2007 and officially ended in June of 2009, the towns in this budget were not yet showing significant budgetary declines although they were seeing a decline in revenue. Further, some cities in this study had clearly been hit harder than

others. Marysville, Calif., for example, led its website with an article about why officials were turning off half of the street lights due to budget constraints. That city (population 12,072) had a budget decline of 17 percent between 2007 and 2012. Even towns the size of Chattanooga, Tennessee (pop: 167,674) saw significant budget declines in a similar time period, from \$278,417,355 in 2005 to \$167,535,000 in 2010. As Cliff Hightower reported in his article on budget cuts in the *Chattanooga Times Free Press* (Aug. 22, 2011), “Staring at a \$13 million shortfall this year, Hamilton County chose to cut millions of dollars from its budget, laying off 36 workers, freezing 20 jobs and ending some services. Just 12 months earlier, Chattanooga looked at its own potential shortfall and raised property taxes by 37 cents....” In the article, Hightower quoted County Mayor Jim Coppinger: “This was a really tough budget because of the reductions. These are real people, and all of us were very sensitive to what was occurring.” Even Dover, Del., a city that was experiencing steady budget growth (up 62 percent in the five-year period of 2005-2010), has seen significant (10 percent) declines in the last two years. As Craig Anderson and Chris Flood reported in the *Delaware State News* (2011), “With the next fiscal year budget predicted to be \$3.4 million short, Dover City Council members have been tasked with some difficult decisions. Topping that list is deciding which of the 23 vacant city positions need to be filled and which ones don’t.” And an earlier article had the simple headline: “Dover committee looks for ways to cut budget” (Eisenbrey, 2011). Clearly budget cuts were on the minds of city officials and reporters.

Despite the talk of budget cuts, talks that seem to have grown more prominent since 2008, in the five-year period between 2005 and 2010, one of the five-year periods used in this study, the cities used saw an average of 3 percent growth (range: -40 percent to +60 percent), slightly smaller than the population growth of just under 4 percent. Anecdotally, local governments, governments that have seen a steady increase in population, decrease in local tax revenues and decrease in federal disbursements, believe the budgetary impact is just now hitting them and that

budget growth is not keeping up with population growth (figure 7). The recession does not seem to have hit the average town used in this study. However, the effects could be delayed as decreased allocations from federal and state governments may not yet be impacting town governments, the governments may be using reserves built up in the boom years to compensate for decreased revenue, or towns may have increased taxes and fees to compensate even over the short term. This study examines only the expense side of the budget, not coverage of local government income or how income has changed during the early part of the century.

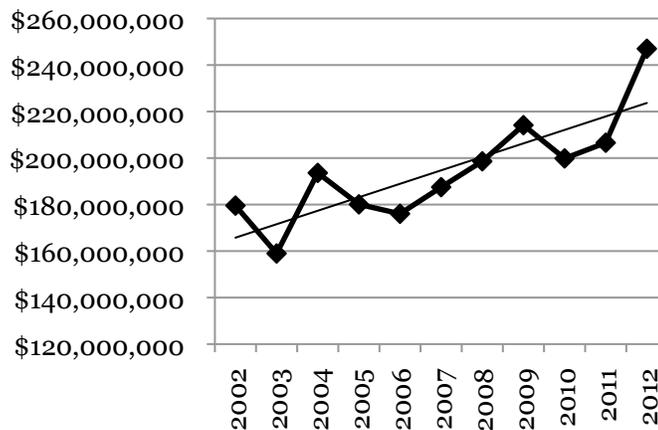


Figure 7: Average Budget of Towns Used in this Study over the Last Decade.

The Relationship

The most important part of this research, however, did not involve looking at what was already painfully obvious in terms of population growth or circulation decline. It involved looking at the relationship between newspaper coverage and policy outcomes. Similar to the research done by Meagan Jordan (2003), this research examined the line items of 143 towns and their newspapers in four areas: public safety, public works, economic development and parks, recreation and tourism to determine if the media might be more influential in any one area over another. It is worth noting that the study of 143 towns represents the analysis of 143 town budgets (each with hundreds of lines that had to be aggregated into the areas of

interest), and 52,195 daily newspapers per year, about 808,679 terms in 2010 alone. The percentage difference in the terms was correlated with the following year's percentage difference in the budget hypothesizing that budget changes followed newspaper reporting.

Table 7: Newspaper Terms Correlated with Town Budget

| | 2008-2009 Correlation (r) | 2009-2010 Correlation (r) | 2010-2011 Correlation (r) | 2011-2012 Correlation (r) |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Economic development | 0.01 | 0.01 | 0.07 | 0.07 |
| Parks, recreation and tourism | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.10 | 0.39*** |
| Public safety | 0.05 | 0.04 | 0.14 | 0.38*** |
| Public works | 0.01 | 0.00 | 0.15* | 0.21** |
| Total terms | 0.06 | 0.02 | 0.09 | 0.12 |
| | n=135 | n=137 | n=133 | n=118 |

*Correlation is significant at the 0.10 level (2-tailed)

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The same methodology used in so many studies beginning with the original agenda-setting studies and now so prevalent in the literature, simple correlation, was used to establish whether there was a relationship or not. In the four years analyzed, (table 7) there were few significant instances where media coverage had an impact on budget outcomes, coinciding with Mortensen and Serritzlew (2006) who also found media coverage had small significant effects on coverage of public libraries ($r= 0.00$) and child-care provision ($r= -0.01$) but not public roads or primary schools. Even when the findings were significant, the effect sizes were small, explaining 15 percent of the variance in policy change at most. Jacob Cohen in his 1988 book on statistical analysis would say the correlations found in this one-year portion of the study ranged from insubstantial ($r=0$ to 0.1) to small ($r=0.1$ to 0.3) to moderate ($r=0.3$ to 0.5). None of the findings indicated large correlations ($r>0.5$). In short, this seems to indicate that coverage in a community newspaper has little relation to policy change over the short-term.

Public safety occupied the greatest portion of the town budgets and increased by 3.4 percent over the three-year period from 2008-2011 and proportionally during each individual year. Even if towns devoted all of their average increase to public safety, they would still have to move another 0.7 percent of their budget into public safety to account for the change in allocations. Perhaps devoting more than one-fourth of the town budget is a reflecting of living in a post-9/11 world or perhaps is merely a reflection that public safety (police, fire and EMS) is a task best relegated to the local governments that have direct contact with their citizens, and the ability to tax them for their efforts. As significant as public safety was in the budget, it was also significant in coverage of everything from wrecks to house fires to crime and personnel changes at the highest levels of public safety within local governments. Yet this coverage showed significance in only one year, 2011-2012 at a moderate level ($r=0.38$). It also showed increased correlation (from $r=0.04$ in 2009-2010 to $r=0.14$ in 2010-2011 to $r=0.38$ in 2011-2012). There is no obvious explanation for this increased relationship.

Public works budgets changed the least (+0.05 percent), seemingly indicating that towns had little flexibility in cutting (or increasing) town budget allocations for infrastructure such as road maintenance, sewage treatment and water purification. In some ways, public works is the one aspect of the budget studies that hits every citizen every day. While citizens generally interact with public safety officials during a crisis, only take advantage of parks, recreation and tourism efforts as needed and rarely notice economic development efforts (including taxation), they quickly notice pot holes in the roads, a lack of water availability or inaccessible sewage treatment. So, that public works was at least weakly correlated in two of the years studied indicates that as media coverage influenced public opinion, policy change resulted in terms of budget allocations. This was not surprising. When aspects of public works are functioning, people hardly notice. But when something breaks, they notice and so do media outlets as stories with headlines such as “Water, Sewer Treatment Plants In Bedford, Franklin Counties Fined” (Hammack, 2010), “Roads Need Our

Attention” (*Greeley Tribune*, 2009) and “Garbage Collection Suspended” (Mangione, 2005) indicate. Still, there is no obvious explanation for why the correlation jumped from $r=0.00$ in 2009-2010 to $r=0.15$ in 2010-2011 and increased again marginally in 2011-2012 to $r=0.21$, but all the increases were similar to those found in public safety. Over time, public works is also unique in that costs for maintenance, construction and upgrades, can be deferred for a short time period. While media coverage pressures may push politicians and bureaucrats to plan for increases, the expenditures may not appear in the budget for years. Towns that saw the budget challenges begin in 2008 may, in 2011 or 2012, be budgeting for expenditures necessitated as the recession started, now hoping to catch up on necessary repairs, maintenance and upgrades to the infrastructure.

The optional city programs dedicated to parks, recreation and tourism got hit the hardest, decreasing by 3.1 percent in the time period of 2008-2011. It seems cities look first toward optional services when they need to cut. Overall, PRT represented a relatively small portion of the budget, 4.6 percent. So a 3.1 percent cut does not represent that much money but for the citizens who use those services, it can mean a lack of everything from little league programs to a lack of senior citizen activities. A January 31, 2010 article by Michael Booth in *The Denver Post* about budget cuts in nearby Colorado Springs hit home with residents.

The parks department removed trash cans last week, replacing them with signs urging users to pack out their own litter.

Neighbors are encouraged to bring their own lawn mowers to local green spaces, because parks workers will mow them only once every two weeks. If that.

Water cutbacks mean most parks will be dead, brown turf by July; the flower and fertilizer budget is zero.

City recreation centers, indoor and outdoor pools, and a handful of museums will close for good March 31 unless they find private funding to stay open. Buses no longer run on evenings and weekends. The city won't pay for any street paving, relying instead on a regional authority that can meet only about 10 percent of the need.

...
“How are people supposed to live? We're not a ‘Mayberry R.F.D.’ anymore,” said Addy Hansen, a criminal justice student who has

spoken out about safety cuts. “We’re the second-largest city, and growing, in Colorado. We’re in trouble. We’re in big trouble.”

Still, the newspaper coverage seemed to have little impact on policy outcomes. The correlation jumped from $r=0.00$ in 2009-2010 to $r=0.10$ in 2010-2011 and $r=0.39$ in 2011-2012. Again, the increases were similar to those in public safety and public works.

Of the four coverage areas, public safety, public works, parks, recreation and tourism and economic development, economic development consistently had the lowest correlation. However, in the three-year period of 2008-2011, economic development budgets were the smallest of the areas studied, accounting for less than 3 percent of the overall budget, but they remained the most stable, increasing by 6.29 percent compared to an average increase of 2.71 percent for overall city budgets in the same time period. While economic development saw the largest relative budget increase over a three-year period, there was little relationship between that increase in newspaper coverage indicating that public officials saw value in economic development without corresponding media coverage. Still, coverage of economic development issues was not lacking. For example, back in 2008, Tim Mekeel reported in the Lancaster (Pa.) *New Era* about a \$4 million allocation being used to rejuvenate existing buildings for multi-use, commercial or industrial projects in the county’s boroughs. In 2003, a Cedar Rapids (Iowa) *Gazette* by Marlene Lucas brought economic development issues home to the farmers. “A promoter of economic development is trying to recruit dairy producers to Iowa, saying the state’s dairy farmers aren’t satisfying the processors in the state.” But dairy farmer Dave Kunde said this would not be beneficial to the state’s economics. “People think it’s a great deal, but they don’t understand the pricing of milk. It’s under a federal order. Other commodities go with the flow of the market,” Kunde said. Headlines like “Northeast Ohio Needs More Jobs, Economic-Development Expert Tells Chamber” (Baker, 2006) and “Mississippi Business Climate Improves, but Still Needs

Strengthening” (Seid, 2004) show that such issues were issues at least some reporters found worth reporting on even if their stories had no impact on policy changes. The correlation between coverage and policy outcomes in economic development increased from $r=0.01$ in 2009-2010 to $r=0.07$ in 2010-2011, approximating the increases in the other variables. However, the correlation remained at $r=0.07$ in 2011-2012.

In the 2008-2009 budget year and 2009-2010 budget year, no items of significance were found and the effect sizes were very small (ranging from $r=0.00$ to $r=0.06$) and did not change much during those two years. The correlations, however, increased in all four coverage areas in 2010-2011 and remained high in 2011-2012, an increase that has no obvious explanation. Of the four items that showed statistical significance, three involved comparing coverage in 2010-2011 with budgets in 2011-2012. However, in 2011-2012, because the coverage cycle had not been complete and some towns had not yet adopted their budgets, 56 of the 143 total towns in the study had incomplete data, 39 percent. Certainly, this renders the results for the final year open to much more scrutiny. The 2011-2012 budgets may be picking up post-recession growth mandated by inflation pressures and population growth. The fourth item, coverage in 2009-2010 for the 2010-2011 budget cycle for public works showed that coverage of public works explained 2 percent ($p<0.1$) of the variance in the policy change, a small effect size to be sure, further substantiating that even with the relationship is significant, coverage has little relation to policy change over the short-term. In addition, this small effect size was significant only at the $p<0.1$ level, indicating that there might be a one in 10 chance that this result is accidental and not worth reporting.

Five-year Correlations

The lack of correlation over one year did correspond to other research such as that of Wildavsky who said policy change does not occur overnight. Walker (1977) accented this in his research that correlated coverage of the Highway Safety Act over

time, showing that it took several years of coverage in both the mass media and technical safety literature before new legislation was passed. Even Kingdon's Multiple Streams model acknowledges that it takes time and a window of opportunity for policy change to occur.

Correspondingly, examining changes over a five-year period proved some significant results. In that examination (table 8), more relationships showed up indicating that while media coverage might not have a short-term impact there may be a long-term influence on policy change. Despite the media's propensity to have short-term memories, the media influence on policy makers may not be so short-term. Models such as the Punctuated Equilibrium model of Baumgartner and Jones (1993) might also explain why broad, policy priorities of city and town governments remain unaffected by media coverage. While a one-year analysis might miss the punctuation, the five-year analysis might account for small, cumulative effects and larger punctuations. However, it was difficult to obtain five consecutive years of budgets for towns, reflecting the decline in the number of towns analyzed. Further, analyzing the data over a five-year period introduces more likelihood that the policy changes may have resulted in the media coverage and public opinion changes rather than policy changes being the result of media coverage and subsequent public opinion in change. While the literature to date indicate that, at least initially, the agendas of the bureaucrats and politicians are set, at least in part, by media coverage, it is certainly possible, as the time period of the study increases, that policies result from other sources than the media and that media coverage follows, rather than precedes, policy change.

Table 8: Newspaper Terms Correlated with Town Budget

| | 2004-2009 Correlation (r) | 2005-2010 Correlation (r) | 2006-2011 Correlation (r) |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Public safety | 0.08 | 0.14* | 0.01 |
| Public works | 0.11 | 0.25** | 0.22*** |
| Parks, recreation and tourism | 0.09 | 0.41*** | 0.31*** |
| Economic development | 0.07 | 0.11 | 0.12 |
| Total | 0.03 | 0.07 | 0.04 |
| | n=46 | n=75 | n=93 |

*Correlation is significant at the 0.10 level (2-tailed)

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The relationship between coverage of public works and policy outcomes was significant in two of the three years studied possibly for similar reasons discussed earlier. Public works just is not as sexy as other areas; in terms of media coverage, it makes headlines when things go wrong, not when they are going right. Coverage of sewage treatment, road construction, water purification, trash collection and construction rarely gets the play of coverage regarding police, fire, EMS, crime (the public safety terms). However, in this simple model, public works reporting, at most, accounted for 6.25 percent of the variation in public works budgeting, a small, or as Hopkins (2002) might say, “minor,” effect size to be sure. In the five-year period from 2004 to 2009, the correlation ($r=0.11$) was small and insignificant. However, in the two other periods analyzed, 2005-2010 and 2006-2011, the results were still small ($r=0.25$ and $r=0.22$ respectively) but were significant.

At the local, citizens have regular involvement with parks, recreation and tourism in everything from softball leagues to walking trails perhaps explaining why coverage of parks, recreation and tourism hits home with administrators and politicians. As an editorial in the May 23, 2006 Macon (Ga.) *Telegraph* said, “Recreation is not just a 'quality of life' issue.” Or as an article in the Dec. 12, 2009 Tulsa (Ok.) *World* reported, “The public is certain to feel the continued squeeze on the Park and Recreation Department, which has been a frequent target of past

budget reductions, Director Lucy Dolman said. ‘We always say it’s bad, but this time it will be devastating,’ she said, adding that it could mean more than 15 layoffs and community center closures’ ” (Barber, 2009). The reporting on parks, recreation and tourism over a five-year period accounted for 16.1 percent of the variance in the budget, still moderate according to Hopkins’ classification but still significant, and consistent over two five-year periods. In the first time period studies, like in public works, the correlation was weak ($r=0.09$) and insignificant. In the two subsequent periods, the results were moderate ($r=0.41$ and $r=0.31$) and significant at the highest levels, $p<0.01$. The relatively large jump between the first five-year period studied and the second was even larger than the jump in public works.

That public safety and economic development were not significant in either five-year model was surprising and seems to indicate that other factors play a more important role in budget changes regarding public safety than the media. In a post 9/11 era, it could be that public safety budget changes have more to do with the national discussion regarding public safety than anything that is said at the local level. Few citizens have any interaction with economic development activities of the city or town, including taxation efforts that are often very long-term and difficult to cover in mass media outlets. In the first time period studied, both public safety and economic development started out trivial, $r=0.08$ and $r=0.07$ respectively. Like other variables, the correlation jumped in the second time period but remained low, $r=0.14$ and $r=0.11$. The public safety correlation was significant, but only at the 0.10 level.

In all cases, the relationship between total budget change and coverage in the preceding year was trivial and insignificant.

Other Variables

Three other variables provided some insight into the local newspaper media used in this study. The first, ownership, reflected national trends. While consumers tend to trust entities that are locally based more than those that are nationally based (Sinclair and Löfstedt, 2001), the vast majority of media are not locally owned

(Bagdikian, 2004). In this study, 31 percent of the 143 papers studied (appendix c) were locally owned, about 10 percent more than the 23.4 percent of independent newspapers Eli Noam found in his 2009 research yet down significantly from the 68.2 percent of independent newspapers in 1960 (Noam, 2009). According to the PEW Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism (2011), Gannett, MediaNews Group, News Corporation, McClatchy and the Tribune Company are the top owners by circulation. However, five companies, GateHouse Media, Community Newspaper Holdings, Gannett, MediaNews Group and Lee Enterprises, own 43 percent of the daily newspapers that sell at least 100,000 print papers on an average weekday. While revenue figures were not available for most of the privately held companies, Gannett's newspaper division alone brought in \$5.44 billion in 2010 and \$5.61 billion (Pew Research Center, 2011). As stated earlier, the relationship between local ownership and circulation was significant, yet small with local ownership accounting for some 2 percent of the variance in circulation ($r=0.18^*$).

The second variable of interest, online use, showed that the vast majority of newspapers in the study (73 percent) not only have a website that is updated at least daily, but also make use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter to distribute their news. An additional 16 percent have a website that is updated at least daily but do not make regular use of social media. This reflects national trends as online readership increased nearly 60 percent 2004 and 2009 and continues to go up (Newspaper Association of America, 2011). "In 2010, digital was the only media sector seeing growth. In December 2010, 41 percent of Americans cited the internet as the place where they got most of their news about national and international issues, up 17 percent from a year earlier." Indeed, as the report showed, "Fully 46 percent of people now say they get news online at least three times a week, surpassing newspapers (40 percent) for the first time" (Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2011). The impact online media have on local coverage, local (and hyperlocal) public opinion and local policy changes are trends worthy of much more exploration.

While this study specifically examines the print edition of newspapers as uploaded to either the newspaper's own website or the EBSCO database, in the last few years, readers have been consuming newspapers in another manner: using mobile devices. As the Newspaper Association of America (Sadowski, 2011) reported, "Many newspapers reported triple-digit page view increases to their mobile sites and apps, demonstrating that newspaper content remains a leading choice for consumers across their multiplatform offerings. ... Unique visitor count increases ranged as high as 200 percent, with an average increase of about 70 percent for the publishers reporting." Studies by the digital audience measurement firm comScore's Digital Omnivore and Pew Research/Economist Group supported the Newspaper Association of America's conclusions. Both groups released studies in October of 2011 showing app users went directly to news organization sites to get news instead of going through a search engine or news aggregator. "In August 2011, 7.7 percent of total traffic going to Newspaper sites came from mobile devices – 3.3-percentage points higher than the amount of mobile traffic going to the total Internet. As consumers continue to seek out breaking news and updated information on the go, it is likely that this share of traffic could grow further for non-computer sources" (comScore, 2011). While public opinion can be swayed by consumption of news media online as well as in print, this type of consumption is not at all reflected in the circulation numbers of this study.

The final variable of interest, staff size, also reflected recent national trends. Employment of full-time professional editorial staff peaked in 2000. It then fell 26.4 percent through 2009 according to the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism (2011). The American Society of Newspaper Editors reported in 2010 that American daily newspapers lost another 5,200 jobs in 2009 bringing the total loss of journalists since 2007 to 13,500. Since 2001, ASNE reported, American newsrooms have lost more than 25 percent of their full-time staffers bringing the total of full-time journalists working in daily newsrooms to 41,500, a level not seen since the mid-1970's. The staff size of newspapers in this study declined 41 percent

from 2000-2010 and 21 percent between 2005 and 2010. Overall, according to the American Society of Newspaper Editors (2011), “American newspapers showed a very slim increase in newsroom employees last year, finally halting a three-year exodus of journalists.... The number of professional journalists rose from an estimated 41,500 in 2009 to 41,600 in 2010, according to ASNE’s most recently completed census of online and traditional newspapers. American daily newspapers lost 13,500 newsroom jobs from 2007 to 2010.” The staff size of the papers used in this study decreased 10 percent between 2009 and 2010 and was, obviously, strongly correlated with the circulation of the paper ($r=0.70^{**}$) supporting data available from other sources.

EXPANDING THE MODEL

Introduction

An editorial in the Chattanooga, Tennessee *Times Free Press* (June 8, 2011) stated one of the fundamental principles of local government budgeting.

“Tennessee lawmakers are fortunately required by our state Constitution to balance the state’s budget each year. That leaves only a couple of options when the cost of the things that the state needs or wants exceeds the funds available: Cut spending or raise taxes. Budget cuts are rarely easy, but they are far preferable to job-killing tax increases.”

Chattanooga was one of the cities in this study with substantial declines in budgeted funds between 2008 and 2011. California cities such as San Luis Obispo, also one of the cities included in this study, were not immune from the budget cuts either.

“Roads are rougher, sidewalks riddled with more cracks and grass at parks left fallow as local governments continue to trim from already lean budgets,” a December 31, 2011 San Luis Obispo *Tribune* article by AnnMarie Cornejo read. “When the recession struck in 2008 and cities began to face steep declines in revenue, government employees faced a new level of scrutiny nationwide and a growing awareness of public salaries became a focal point of heated discussions.”

During the last decade, spending cuts have been on the minds not only of bureaucrats and politicians but also of reporters and citizens alike as the Great Recession forced towns to cut services, everything from street lights to trash pickup to summer baseball. This research examines the impact that local media outlets have on policy changes, the budget specifically. The analysis in the previous chapter showed a weak relationship between newspaper coverage and policy change, a relationship that was stronger over a longer time period than a shorter one. Focusing on the five-year analysis shown to be most relevant in the last chapter, the additional examination begins with a more complex regression analysis used to evaluate the relationship between the newspaper coverage and changes in the budget, including the impact of geography and the impact of media coverage on various local

government departments. Geography does matter when studying local government budgets and not all departments are influenced equally by media coverage. The chapter also includes discussion of the variables for staff size, market saturation (circulation / population), online presence and local ownership conceived as part of the original set of hypotheses.

Coverage and Policy Change

H1: Local coverage and policy change will be positively correlated.

Of the hundreds of studies on agenda setting, mostly at the national level and mostly of public opinion, researchers often found extremely high correlations, as high as 1.0 (Maher, 1996). Over time, the concept of agenda setting, that media coverage influences public opinion became accepted. Subsequent studies took this concept one step further by examining the relationship between media coverage, public opinion and policy outcomes. Mortensen and Serritzlew (2006), for example, examined in the relationship between media coverage and changes in the budgets of 191 Danish municipalities over a 13-year period to examine the outer boundaries of media influence. “If public spending,” they concluded, “is not affected by the media, then this is an empirical finding that tells us something important about the outer limits of media effects.” They reported that the media may affect political discussions and certain political decisions, but the budgets and broader policy priorities remain largely unaffected.

Similarly, this study examined the impact of media coverage not on public opinion but on policy change. In findings similar to those of Mortensen and Serritzlew, this study finds that media have almost no impact on budget changes in the short-term (one year) and minimal impact over a five-year period — identifying more clearly an outer boundary for media effects. Even when the media coverage does impact policy change, it does not do so equally across all areas of the budget.

While media reports had an impact on changes in the budget at least in some departments, external factors, such as the economic downturn of 2008, influenced changes in policy as well. By 2012, the budgets of the towns in this study started showing signs of declining as part of the Great Recession that began in late 2007 (National Bureau of Economic Research, 2008). While it appeared that federal aid to local governments, incremental tax/fee increases and use of reserve monies helped many town avoid cutting their budgets significantly early on, by 2011, the federal aid and reserve monies had dried up and citizens were not willing to be taxed at a high enough rate to keep government services functioning at the same level as they had prior to the economic downturn. In the period between 2003 and 2008, the budgets of the towns in this study grew by an average of 33 percent. However, between 2005 and 2010, they grew by only 21 percent.

Supporting the individual-variable analysis in the previous chapter, none of the additional independent variables had any impact on the one-year analysis, as table 9 indicates. Only the relationship between local ownership and staff size was found to be significant, and then with a barely moderate effect size. One year did not give the media outlets enough time to have a perceptible impact on budgetary changes.

Table 9: Correlations of Newspaper and Town Variables on 2009-2010 City Budget Totals

| | Mean | Standard deviation | Local ownership | Market saturation | Staff size | Web coverage | Content analysis |
|--------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Budget | 728.55 | 8424.08 | -0.06 | -0.04 | 0.10 | 0.05 | -0.03 |
| Local ownership | 0.31 | 0.46 | | 0.10 | 0.29** | -0.09 | 0.01 |
| Market saturation | 0.58 | 0.50 | | | 0.10 | -0.06 | -0.07 |
| Staff size | 21.14 | 12.45 | | | | -0.05 | -0.11 |
| Web coverage | 3.61 | 0.75 | | | | | 0.03 |

*Correlation is significant at the 0.10 level (2-tailed)

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Similarly, in a one-year model from 2009-2010 (table 10), none of the individual policy areas (economic development, parks, recreation and tourism, public safety and public works) revealed statistically significant results. The one-year models added little to the discussion except that media effects do not occur over the short-term. Instead, as this analysis showed and the analysis in the previous chapter supported, examination over a longer time period provides more insight. Other research by Walker (1977), Baumgartner and Jones (1993) and Kingdon (2003) and basic decision-making theory supports this insight. It simply takes time to establish objectives, alternatives and make decisions. “Time is an ever present and prominent dimension in all human decision making. Decisions are oriented towards future time, they take time to make, their consequences develop over time, and they are sometimes thought about for a long time afterwards” (Ranyard, Crozier and Svenson, 1997; Ariely, Zakay, 2001).

Table 10: Correlation of Newspaper and Town Variables on Various City Budget Line Items

| | 2009-2010 Model |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Economic development | 0.01 |
| N | 137 |
| Adjusted R ² | -0.02 |
| Parks, recreation and tourism | 0.00 |
| N | 137 |
| Adjusted R ² | -0.02 |
| Public safety | 0.04 |
| N | 137 |
| Adjusted R ² | -0.01 |
| Public works | 0.00 |
| N | 137 |
| Adjusted R ² | -0.02 |
| Total | -0.03 |
| N | 133 |
| Adjusted R ² | -0.02 |

* Significant at the 0.10 level (2-tailed)

** Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

*** Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Initially, an evaluation of the assumptions of the independent variables led to transformation of the independent variables several of which had a skewness value exceeding 1 and a higher than expected kurtosis value which might have indicated the presence of outliers. To examine the possible presence of outliers and skewness, each of the groups for analysis (economic development, parks, recreation and tourism, public safety and public works) were run first with no transformations, then with a logarithmic transformation on market saturation (circulation divided by population) and finally with a logarithmic transformation on web coverage, staff size, budget change and market saturation. While there was no theoretical basis for the transformations, the high values for kurtosis indicated this transformation might improve the normal distribution of the variables. However, while it did decrease the values for kurtosis and skewness, it did so only marginally and neither improved the significance nor the effect size of the equations.

Because market saturation includes population and because there is a theoretical foundation for transformation of variables that are spread over several orders of magnitude, including population, the transformation of this variable was retained. A transformation is validated in literature and the logarithm transformation is favored to improve normality and to reduce positive skewness (Hopkins, 2002; Allison, 1999; Tabachnick and Fidell, 2001). Market saturation had skewness of 3.055 initially and 0.321 after the logarithmic transformation. Initially, the variable also had a kurtosis value of 12.674, which was reduced to 0.083 after the transformation. In addition, as part of the analysis of the equation, to reduce the impact of missing values absent in the five-year model due to the inability to obtain five consecutive years of budget or content analysis data, the missing values were replaced with the mean.

Table 11 displays the correlations between the variables. In all cases, the values of r (and hence the variance explained) improved with the five independent variables included when compared to the simple correlations of budget change and change in newspaper coverage over the time period studied.

Table 11: Correlations of Newspaper and City Variables on 2005-2010 City Budget Totals Including All Regions

| | Mean | Standard deviation | Content analysis | Local ownership | Market saturation (log) | Web coverage | Staff size |
|--------------------------------|--------|--------------------|------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|--------------|------------|
| Budget change (DV) | 117.97 | 20.21 | -0.03 | 0.07 | -0.10 | -0.07 | -0.05 |
| Content analysis | 635.57 | 583.57 | | -0.10 | -0.08 | 0.03 | -0.01 |
| Local ownership | 0.31 | 0.46 | | | 0.09 | -0.07 | 0.28*** |
| Market saturation (log) | -0.78 | 0.71 | | | | -0.05 | 0.14** |
| Web coverage | 3.60 | 0.74 | | | | | -0.06 |
| Staff size | 21.09 | 12.04 | | | | | |

*Correlation is significant at the 0.10 level (2-tailed)

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The first examination of the data involved the aggregated change in total city budget during the five-year period and change in total number of terms in the database during the same time period. The only two variables that showed any significance at all were local ownership / staff size and the log of market saturation / staff size. Papers with higher market saturation utilize a larger staff. Because the direction of the relationship cannot be determined from this analysis, it is possible that larger staffs generate papers with higher market saturation. Regardless of which direction that relationship developed, it was not as interesting as the significant relationship between local ownership and staff size. In terms of direction, it seems much more plausible that locally owned papers have larger staffs than non-locally owned papers than that larger staffs generate local ownership.

Despite validation of some ideas presented in the literature, the entire equation was not statistically significant possibly due to the aggregation of the data. Though one department's budget, or a line item within that budget, might change significantly resulting in major changes in service, the money for that increased

service may come from another area or the money for decreased service might go to another area resulting in little net change in the budget. Similarly, newspapers may choose to cover public safety, for example, to the exclusion of economic development, public works or parks/recreation/tourism due to some issue in the area of public safety. Due to staff or space limitations, the total amount of coverage in the paper may remain the same. The amount of coverage (sheer number of stories) is probably more related to advertising income than any desire to cover more stories.

Geographic Significance

With the anecdotal evidence piling up that some states were hit harder than others for reasons that were beyond the scope of this study, one area worth examining was geographic though it was not a part of the original study design. Indeed, geography does seem to matter when it comes to budget stability as model 3 in table 12 demonstrates in comparison to model 2 with subregion 4.9 excluded. The U.S. Department of the Census divides the country into four major regions: 1 — northeast, 2 — central, 3 — southeast and 4 — west. A univariate analysis of variance of both the one-year data and the five-year data resulted in a significant Levene's Test, showing that the groups formed by region vary significantly in their variations on change in the budget. Between 2009 and 2010, region 4 saw an average budget decrease of 2.59 percent while region 1 saw an average increase of 1.81 percent. Over both the short-term and the long-term, the budget shortfalls hit states in region 4 harder.

The trends continued to be apparent when the subregions were included in another univariate analysis of variance and regression analysis. The U.S. Department of the Census further breaks down the country into nine subregions. This analysis too was significant. The Partial Eta Squared value for the one-year change for subregion 4.9 was 0.10 ($p < 0.01$) and 0.71 for the five-year change ($p < 0.01$). Between 2009 and 2010, the budgets of the states in subregion 4.9 (California, Oregon and Washington) declined by 5.8 percent. Between 2005 and 2010, the budgets of the

towns in subregion 4.9 grew by only 15.5 percent compared to an overall average of 21.3 percent. The towns in subregion 4.8 grew by 31.1 percent over the same time period.⁸ The population in subregion 4.9 increased by 8.1 percent while other subregions saw an average population increase of 4.1 percent. All other regions during the five-year period showed an increase in total budgeted allocations of between 12 percent and 31 percent. Subregion 4.8 saw the largest increase, 31 percent. In short, the budgets of the Western states (California, Oregon and Washington) increased at a rate slower than the rest of the country. Further, as the literature indicated, California, due to decades of over-spending and poor fiscal management, bore the brunt of the economic downturn.

The hardships in California, in particular, are nothing new, brought on initially and immediately with the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978. After the passage of that proposition, governments went into deep fiscal crisis in the recession of 1980-82 and the state had to bail them out by transferring money from the general fund (Schrag, 1998). To make matters worse, the Reagan administration in Washington cut federal revenue sharing and aid to cities (Davis, 1993) and the Deukmejian administration in Sacramento put its money into the greatest prison-building splurge in U.S. history (Gilmore, 2007). In the downturn of 1990-93 after the tech stock bubble, the state took a \$11 billion nosedive into the red on a \$50 billion budget (Walker, 1995). To keep things running on reduced tax revenues, the government began to issue more bonds, pushing the state further and further into debt. The result has been horrendous slashing of the budgets for schools, higher education, health and welfare, and local government functions (Schrag, 2009) and an economic system that is unresponsive to policy changes, including changes in the budget. This stalemated society simply cannot respond to the issues it faces. Hence, excluding California, Oregon and Washington (subregion 4.9) shows us what influence media has on policy where the system allows for change. For the media or

⁸ The towns in subregion 3.6 saw a budget increase of 12.6 percent in 2005-2010. However, when one outlier, Chattanooga, Tenn., a town that saw a substantial decline in its public works budget over one year, was removed, that subregion saw an increase of 23.1 percent between 2005 and 2010.

other external factors to have an impact on California, will require some type of revolution that results in a change in the constitutional structure at the foundation of that state's government.

What happens in California as a state, with the largest state and local government budget in the country, has an impact on municipalities within the state and also on other parts of the country simply due to California's size. The state is the country's largest sub-economy, accounting for roughly 13 percent of national output and the largest budget after the federal government, about \$100 billion per annum in the 2000s. California also has the largest budget deficit of any state today (McNichol and Johnson, 2010). California's budget deficits peaked at \$45.5 billion in 2010, now down to \$8.4 billion projected for 2013, about one-tenth of the state's budget. However, California is not the only Western state with budget challenges. Washington and Oregon (the other two states that make up subregion 4.9) too have faced their challenges. By 2013, Oregon faced a \$1.7 billion projected deficit, about one-fourth of its budget. Washington faced a \$3.5 billion deficit (down from \$4.8 billion in 2010), one-fifth of that state's budget (McNichol, Oliff and Johnson, 2012).

The downsizing of the manufacturing industry, the bursting of the tech stock bubble and the rapid increase in home sales and prices that made for unaffordable housing made California's problems multifaceted, complex and difficult to solve. Over time, all of these factors, and others, led to increasing unemployment. "The state's new unemployment rate — 12.2 percent, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics — is far above the national average of 9.7 percent and places California, the national's most-populous state, fourth behind Michigan, Nevada and Rhode Island" (Steinhauer, 2009). "Many of the cities with the longest road to recovery are California cities, where home prices rocketed out of control and entire economies were supported largely by a real estate bubble. Fresno, Modesto, Salinas, Bakersfield, Stockton and Los Angeles all saw home prices soar to unsustainable levels and then begin their inevitable plunge. The collapse of the housing markets pushed unemployment rates in these cities above 10 percent" (Zumbrun, 2009). In turn, the

high unemployment led to declining tax revenues at all levels of government and to deeper cuts in public services, everything from street lights to trash collection to public transportation.

According to researchers, California is not simply another state falling in the shadow of the economic changes — it was the cause. “[I]f Wall Street was the eye of the financial hurricane of the last decade, then California was the equivalent of the tropical oceans that provide the heat to feed such raging storms. More than any other place, California was the source of mass mortgage lending, ballooning home values and dubious subprime operations. In short, California needs to be recognized as the pivotal site of the bubble of the 2000s, the bursting of the financial markets and the Great Recession that followed” (Bardhan and Walker, 2010).

Following four years of what some have termed draconian budget cuts, some indicators by 2012, an election year, show that the state of California as well as the cities and towns in that state, are poised for a slow recovery. While the state’s fiscal conditions are improving along with the broader economy, the state is coming out of a deep hole. Further, states face major obstacles slowing their fiscal recovery, including the shifting role of federal government, which allowed much of the emergency aid to states to expire in 2011 — a decision that left states with fewer options to address their still substantial budget shortfalls in fiscal year 2012 and beyond (McNichol, Oliff and Johnson, 2012). If revenues continue to grow at the 2011 rate, it would take seven years to get some state budgets back on a normal track. The short-term outlook for California and the other Western states primarily depends on U.S. trends. (Levy, 2011) Cities with robust technology sectors, including some in the Western states, are poised for stronger recoveries than manufacturing or finance centers. Cities with high-tech capabilities such as Seattle, Huntsville, Ala., or Boulder, Colo., could see quick recovery in coming months (Zumbrun, 2009).

Table 12: Regression of Total Change in Newspaper Coverage and Total Change in Budget, 2005-2010 (Unstandardized Coefficients)

| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Content analysis | 0.00 (0.00) | 0.00 (0.00) | 0.00 (0.00) |
| Local ownership | | 3.71 (3.86) | 1.72 (2.86) |
| Market saturation (log) | | -2.93 (2.44) | -3.88** (1.90) |
| Web coverage | | -2.00 (2.31) | -3.83** (1.71) |
| Staff size | | -0.11 (0.15) | -0.11 (0.11) |
| Constant | 121.47*** (2.21) | 124.67*** (9.50) | 134.74*** (7.02) |
| R² | 0.01 | 0.03 | 0.08* |
| Adjusted R² | -0.01 | -0.01 | 0.04 |
| N | 75 | 142 | 121 |
| Standard error of estimate | 14.76 | 20.31 | 14.21 |

NOTE: Standard errors are in parenthesis

Model 1: No control variables

Model 2: Control variables with all regions

Model 3: Control variables excluding region 4.9

* Significant at the 0.10 level (2-tailed)

** Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

*** Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Comparing Models

Taking into account the independent variables for local ownership, market saturation, online coverage and staff size and eliminating subregion 4.9 produces the best results when examining the relationship between newspaper coverage and changes in the budget during a five-year period as the comparison of the three models in table 12 demonstrates. While the model is only significant at $p < 0.1$ (unacceptable for a determination of significance in most situations), given the small sample size, it is worth noting. The third model presents not only an increased level

of significance, it represents a larger effect size. While still weak, accounting for only 4 percent of the variance (adjusted $r^2=0.04$), it improves on the basic correlation between coverage and changes in the budget over a five-year period and over the model with subregion 4.9 included. The relatively large value for the probability, however, could indicate that there is no detectable difference between budget changes in relation to coverage and budget changes without coverage.

As the model indicates, however, two independent variables, the log of market saturation (circulation / population) and web coverage are statistically significant, $p<0.05$. They also contribute to the model with large coefficients, -0.19 (1.90 standardized) for the log of market saturation and -0.20 (1.712 standardized) for Web coverage. For every unit increase in the log of market saturation, the town's budget decreases by 0.19 units holding all other variables constant. Similarly, for every unit increase in Web coverage, the town's budget decreases by 0.20 holding all other variables constant. The interpretation of why a town's budget would decrease simply because the market saturation of a newspaper goes up or online coverage increases is challenging. Clearly more factors influence the changes in a town's budget. The coefficients for coverage, local ownership and staff size are not significant.

Part of the challenge for this model, as noted any time the total budget was used, is that the town may have the same total budget (and therefore no change over a given time period) but may have changed the allocations for line items drastically. Such changes would not be indicated when the aggregated budget is used, hence explaining why various line items were used for the bulk of this study. While the aggregated budget and coverage equations gave little insight into the relationship between coverage and policy outcomes, the individual budget lines provided more insight.

Departmental Significance

When examining the relationship between change in media coverage and change in departmental budgets, the first step was to look at the relationship between each of the independent variables. For economic development (table 13), none of the independent variables was related to the change in the budget. However, some independent variables were statistically related to one another. For example, change in coverage (content analysis) was statistically highly correlated with local ownership. As the literature confirms, locally-owned newspapers cover municipal issues more than papers that are not locally owned. Similarly, (log of) market saturation were statistically related to coverage. That is, newspapers with a higher market saturation covered local issues more than papers with a lower market saturation. Of course, correlation does not determine causation. The relationship could mean that papers with a higher market saturation cover more local issues or because they cover local issues, they have a higher market saturation. Finally, as is also covered in the literature, newspapers that are locally owned have larger staffs. Though the observation is a correlation, not a causation, it is less likely based on prior research that papers are locally owned because they have larger staffs. While the relationship between local ownership and market saturation and the relationship between market saturation and staff size were both statistically significant, they were significant only at the lowest level ($p < 0.1$). While both of those relationships are substantiated in the literature and seem logical, they merit little discussion as part of this research.

Table 13: Correlations of Newspaper and City Variables on 2005-2010 Economic Development Budget Excluding Subregion 4.9

| | Mean | Standard deviation | Content analysis | Local ownership | Market saturation (log) | Web coverage | Staff size |
|--------------------------------|-------|--------------------|------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|--------------|------------|
| Budget change (DV) | 0.54 | 2.72 | 0.08 | 0.08 | -0.05 | -0.03 | -0.02 |
| Content analysis | 0.82 | 3.94 | | 0.23*** | 0.18** | 0.12* | -0.04 |
| Local ownership | 0.33 | 0.47 | | | 0.13* | -0.06 | 0.25*** |
| Market saturation (log) | -0.75 | 0.70 | | | | -0.06 | 0.14* |
| Web coverage | 3.59 | 0.76 | | | | | -0.04 |
| Staff size | 21.46 | 12.55 | | | | | |

*Correlation is significant at the 0.10 level (2-tailed)

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Like the aggregated, total budget, the equation using the economic development budget as the dependent variable was not statistically significant (table 14). The coefficients, which were not statistically significant, were all small.

Table 14: Regression of Change in Newspaper Coverage and Change in Economic Development Budget, 2005-2010 (Unstandardized Coefficients)

| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Content analysis | 0.13 (0.10) | 0.14 (0.11) | 0.06 (0.07) |
| Local ownership | | -0.14 (0.95) | 0.42 (0.57) |
| Market saturation (log) | | -0.66 (0.60) | -0.29 (0.37) |
| Web coverage | | 0.15 (0.56) | -0.16 (0.34) |
| Staff size | | -0.05 (0.04) | -0.01 (0.02) |
| Constant | 0.88** (0.44) | 0.83 (2.28) | 0.82 (1.34) |
| R² | 0.01 | 0.04 | 0.02 |
| Adjusted R² | 0.00 | 0.00 | -0.03 |
| N | 138 | 142 | 122 |
| Standard error of estimate | 4.99 | 4.94 | 2.76 |

NOTE: Standard errors are in parenthesis

Model 1: No control variables

Model 2: Control variables with all regions

Model 3: Control variables excluding region 4.9

* Significant at the 0.10 level (2-tailed)

** Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

*** Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Of interest, however, was that the mean percentage change in the economic development budget during the five-year period was only 1.02 percent, the smallest change of any of the lines affected when controlling for the change in the total budget. Economic development budgets remained stable during this time period in comparison to the total budget. As discussed previously, economic development budgets, representing only 2.28 percent of the budgets of the towns in this study, are small when compared to the overall budget. Cities such as West Covina, Calif., an outlier when examining the economic development budget since the town devoted nearly 40 percent of its general fund budget and 19 percent of its entire budget to economic development, included items such as developing affordable housing for

residents and the rehabilitation of deteriorating business centers in that city's line item for economic development. Other towns included such items in other lines or established separate economic development authorities, with separate budgets, for such activities.

The relationships in the variables related to parks, recreation and tourism provided more insight. The evaluation showed changes in newspaper coverage were more closely related to changes in policy (table 15). First and foremost, change in the coverage of parks, recreation and tourism was highly statistically significant. In addition, at least for this budget area, the newspaper's staff size was also highly significant in its relationship to policy changes during the five-year period. Further, the change in the coverage of parks, recreation and tourism (content analysis) was also related to local ownership of the paper, market saturation and online coverage. While it cannot be determined whether policy change resulted from the change of coverage or coverage resulted from the change in policy — even the basic model predicts that the relationship between coverage and policy change is bi-directional — they are more strongly related in this policy area than in any other. Relationships between other independent variables, local ownership and market saturation, local ownership and staff size as well as staff size and market saturation are statistically significant at least at $p < 0.1$ and were discussed as part of the discussion above on economic development.

Table 15: Correlations of Newspaper and City Variables on 2005-2010 Parks, Recreation and Tourism Budget Excluding Subregion 4.9

| | Mean | Standard deviation | Content analysis | Local ownership | Market saturation (log) | Web coverage | Staff size |
|--------------------------------|-------|--------------------|------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|--------------|------------|
| Budget change (DV) | 1.97 | 3.70 | 0.52*** | 0.10 | 0.10 | -0.04 | -0.21*** |
| Content analysis | 4.72 | 5.55 | | 0.16** | 0.18** | 0.15** | -0.07 |
| Local ownership | 0.33 | 0.47 | | | 0.13* | -0.06 | 0.25*** |
| Market saturation (log) | -0.75 | 0.70 | | | | -0.06 | 0.14* |
| Web coverage | 3.59 | 0.76 | | | | | -0.04 |
| Staff size | 21.46 | 12.55 | | | | | |

*Correlation is significant at the 0.10 level (2-tailed)

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Whether the model was the most basic regression with one independent variable (content analysis) or a complex, yet a still incomplete, set of independent variables, the relationship between the change in newspaper coverage during a five-year period and the change in the budget for that line are strongly related ($p < 0.01$). As table 16 indicates, the model explains about 30 percent of the variance in the budgeting for parks, recreation and tourism in those states other than California, Washington and Oregon. Of all the relationships in this study, this one was the statistically largest and most significant relationship. Both the newspaper coverage and staff size were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) in relation to the budget changes. Newspaper coverage had a standardized regression coefficient of 0.51 (0.34 unstandardized) indicating that an increase of one standard deviation in coverage produces an increase of 0.51 standard deviations in budget, clearly something worth noting. During the five-year period in this study, when controlling for the change in the total budget, PRT budgets increased by 2.13 percent when compared to the approximately 18 percent increase of the total budget over the same time period.

Table 16: Regression of Change in Newspaper Coverage and Change in Parks, Recreation and Tourism Budget, 2005-2010, (Unstandardized Coefficients)

| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Content analysis | 0.28*** (0.05) | 0.26** (0.05) | 0.34*** (0.05) |
| Local ownership | | 0.35 (0.73) | 0.46 (0.64) |
| Market saturation (log) | | 0.52 (0.46) | 0.08 (0.42) |
| Web coverage | | 0.014 (0.44) | -0.57 (0.38) |
| Staff size | | -0.07** (0.03) | -0.06** (0.02) |
| Constant | 0.82** (0.41) | 2.67 (1.79) | 3.57** (1.52) |
| R² | 0.17 | 0.20*** | 0.32*** |
| Adjusted R² | 0.16 | 0.17 | 0.29 |
| N | 138 | 143 | 122 |
| Standard error of estimate | 3.91 | 3.85 | 3.13 |

NOTE: Standard errors are in parenthesis

Model 1: No control variables

Model 2: Control variables with all regions

Model 3: Control variables excluding region 4.9

* Significant at the 0.10 level (2-tailed)

** Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

*** Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

While newspaper coverage of economic development issues, including taxation, was difficult to find, newspaper reports seem more willing to cover parks, recreation and tourism in their communities. One of the frequent topics for coverage was a decrease in service, including the closing of various parks. If it were not a reflection of tough budget times and real cuts in services, the commentary on Denis C. Theriault’s newspaper blog about budget cuts in Portland would be humorous. “Yesterday, the Bureau of Parks and Recreation was the first city office to release its own doomsday cutback plans, and it’s not pretty,” he said on December 9, 2011. “Even in the lightest scenario, portable toilets would replace park restrooms (like at Occupy Portland!), Buckman Pool would close, and so would one community center. Layoffs appear to be in the worst-case plan.”

While Portland was not one of the cities in this study, the impact on parks, recreation and tourism in local communities was so obvious that even the *New York Times* reported on it (McKinley, 2011). “There are few things in life more doleful than a child looking at a closed pool on a steamy summer day, and yet that sad scene has become as common as sunburns and mosquito bites as struggling local governments make the painful choice to shut their pools to save the budget. The list of locales where public pools have been in jeopardy in recent years includes some of the sweatiest spots in the nation, including Central Florida (90s and humid on the Fourth), Atlanta (90), and Houston (97).”

One of the complications of analyzing parks, recreation and tourism as part of the budget was that, like public works, cities and towns often included only operational costs in the budget, most often as part of the general fund. Physical plant improvements, land purchases and other costs which might be directly associated with parks and recreation but over a longer time period than the typical annual budget were sometimes included in separate funds or capital improvement budgets typically not included in this study. On average, parks, recreation and tourism made up 6.12 percent of the budgets in this study, larger than economic development but less than one-third of public works and one-fifth of public safety.

The relationship between coverage of public safety and change in the line-item budget for public safety (including police, fire and EMS) (table 17) bore similarities to economic development (where there was no relationship) and parks, recreation and tourism (where there was a strong relationship). Descriptively, while the budgets did see an increase over the period studied (1.98 percent on average), newspaper coverage of public safety increased 10.01 percent on average. During the five years between 2005-2010, while public safety budgets increased marginally, less than the 4.7 percent increase in population, news coverage increased five times as much. For every unit increase in newspaper coverage, the town’s budget increases by 0.15 ($p < 0.1$) holding all other variables constant. Local ownership of the newspaper also seemed related to changes in the public safety budget. Local newspaper owners,

like all residents of a community, have a vested interest in the safety and security of that community. In addition, the change in newspaper coverage was also related to the online presence of the newspaper. At least in the area of public safety, for every unit increase in newspaper coverage, Web coverage increased 0.15 ($p < 0.05$). Web coverage and print coverage are probably more closely related than this research indicates. The statistics could also indicate that newspapers that have more of an online presence tend to cover public safety issues (including breaking news such as car wrecks and house fires) more than newspapers with less of an online presence.

Table 17: Correlations of Newspaper and City Variables on 2005-2010 Public Safety Budget Excluding Subregion 4.9

| | Mean | Standard deviation | Content analysis | Local ownership | Market saturation (log) | Web coverage | Staff size |
|--------------------------------|-------|--------------------|------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|--------------|------------|
| Budget change (DV) | 11.55 | 15.49 | 0.15* | 0.16** | 0.06 | 0.07 | -0.11 |
| Content analysis | 13.37 | 9.93 | | 0.01 | -0.16** | 0.15** | 0.06 |
| Local ownership | 0.33 | 0.47 | | | 0.13* | -0.06 | 0.25*** |
| Market saturation (log) | -0.75 | 0.70 | | | | -0.06 | 0.14* |
| Web coverage | 3.59 | 0.76 | | | | | -0.04 |
| Staff size | 21.46 | 12.55 | | | | | |

*Correlation is significant at the 0.10 level (2-tailed)

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

In comparison to the other two models, the third model, including all the independent variables and excluding subregion 4.9, provides the best insight into the relationship between public safety budgets and public safety coverage. As table 18 indicates, the model was statistically significant, but only at the $p < 0.1$ level and then with a small effect size ($r^2 = 0.08$). However, the overall model showed three significant independent variables, including coverage (content analysis) ($B=0.25$,

p<0.1), local ownership (B=6.36, p<0.05) and staff size (B=-0.22, p<0.1) in relation to budget change. Given that it is the most significant, the contribution of local ownership to a positive change in public safety coverage is especially worth noting.

Table 18: Regression of Change in Newspaper Coverage and Change in Public Safety Budget, 2005-2010 (Unstandardized Coefficients)

| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Content analysis | 0.23 (0.13) | 0.22* (0.13) | 0.25* (0.14) |
| Local ownership | | 4.50 (3.23) | 6.36** (3.04) |
| Market saturation (log) | | 1.18 (2.06) | 1.84 (2.04) |
| Web coverage | | 2.05 (1.95) | 1.13 (1.85) |
| Staff size | | -0.27** (0.13) | -0.22* (0.12) |
| Constant | 9.10*** (2.20) | 7.07 (7.91) | 8.10 (7.38) |
| R² | 0.02* | 0.07* | 0.08* |
| Adjusted R² | 0.01 | 0.03 | 0.04 |
| N | 139 | 143 | 122 |
| Standard error of estimate | 17.38 | 17.10 | 15.16 |

NOTE: Standard errors are in parenthesis

Model 1: No control variables

Model 2: Control variables with all regions

Model 3: Control variables excluding region 4.9

* Significant at the 0.10 level (2-tailed)

** Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

*** Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

By far, public safety was the largest single portion, nearly one-third (32.49 percent) on average, of most town's budgets. In Middletown, Ohio, a town of only 16,249 people in 2010, public safety made up nearly three-fourths of the city's budget. In some towns, public safety included everything from police to fire to EMS to the municipal courts while other towns included only police, apparently falling under other jurisdictions for other services. Despite being such a large portion of the budget — or perhaps because public safety was a large portion of the budget — public

safety budgets showed less correlation between change in coverage and change in budget over time. That media had little influence on budget changes could also have been because bureaucrats and politicians see the dangers of cutting public safety in a post-9/11 era when public safety is seen as an essential, governmental function.

Still, public safety operations are not immune from recent budget cuts and certainly still warrant coverage in all types of media. Chris Hoene, director of research for the Washington-based National League of Cities, said, “Typically, the public safety sector is sacrosanct. You tend to only see cuts move to public safety when [an economic] downturn’s pretty deep so the fact that we’re seeing layoffs and cuts in funding for public safety services is indicative of just the times that we’re in” (Brock, 2009). While public safety services are generally the last to suffer budget cuts when cities face hard times (Brock, 2010), police and fire departments were cut back in 63 percent of the cities and 39 percent of counties responding to a survey by the Washington-based National Association of Counties, National League of Cities and U.S. Conference of Mayors. “For some communities, this means fire and police stations that are closed and the potential for reduced capacity to respond to emergencies” (U.S. Department of Justice, 2011). In addition, the study cited specifics regarding cuts in public safety — cuts that included the following:

- By the end of the year, it is expected that nearly 12,000 police officers and sheriff’s deputies will have been laid off.
- Approximately 30,000 law enforcement jobs are unfilled.
- An estimated 28,000 officers and deputies have faced week-long furloughs in 2010.
- An estimated 53 percent of counties are working with fewer staff today than one year ago.
- 2011 could produce the first national decline in law enforcement officer positions in at least the last 25 years.

American City and County magazine (August, 2009) also reported on cuts in public safety beyond cuts in police departments in some larger cities, cities generally

beyond the scope of this study For example, Los Angeles cancelled its July 2009 recruiting class. In June, after closing several stations and implementing brownouts and hiring freezes during the past year, Atlanta found its ISO rating in danger of falling from a 2 to a 4. In July, Boston eliminated two of its 11 fire districts and implemented rotating brownouts for three out of 34 engine companies and one of 22 ladder companies, based on absences. The same study found that less than 10 percent of the responding cities were making cuts in public safety, Hoene said many of the cuts are happening in larger cities, such as Atlanta and Boston, where they are more noticeable (Brock, 2009).

Finally, the change in coverage of public works, like the coverage of parks, recreation and tourism was highly significant and correlated with a change in the budget for public works during a five-year period, excluding subregion 4.9 (table 19). Budget change was correlated with the content analysis (0.39, $p < 0.01$) and with the staff size of the newspaper (-0.16, $p < 0.05$). In addition, the change in newspaper coverage was also, again, related to local ownership (0.15, $p < 0.05$) and (the log of) market saturation (0.17, $p < 0.05$). As discussed above under economic development, local ownership was also related to (log of) market saturation and staff size, and (the log of) market saturation was related to staff size.

Table 19: Correlations of Newspaper and City Variables on 2005-2010 Public Works Budget Excluding Subregion 4.9

| | Mean | Standard deviation | Content analysis | Local ownership | Market saturation (log) | Web coverage | Staff size |
|--------------------------------|-------|--------------------|------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|--------------|------------|
| Budget change (DV) | 7.81 | 13.98 | 0.39*** | 0.07 | 0.07 | -0.02 | -0.16** |
| Content analysis | 3.65 | 5.73 | | 0.15** | 0.17** | 0.09 | -0.08 |
| Local ownership | 0.33 | 0.47 | | | 0.13* | -0.06 | 0.25*** |
| Market saturation (log) | -0.75 | 0.70 | | | | -0.06 | 0.14* |
| Web coverage | 3.59 | 0.76 | | | | | -0.04 |
| Staff size | 21.46 | 12.55 | | | | | |

*Correlation is significant at the 0.10 level (2-tailed)

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

As a whole, the model examining the relationship between public works coverage and the change in the public works budget was, like the model for parks, recreation and tourism, highly significant ($p < 0.01$) with an adjusted effect size of 0.14. So, coverage of items related to parks, recreation and tourism (everything from swimming pools to little league), explained between 14 (adjusted) and 18 percent of the variance in the budget over a five-year period excluding the states of California, Oregon and Washington, making this a moderate to large correlation. In addition, as table 20 indicates, the coefficients for coverage (0.93) and staff size (-0.17) were significant, coverage at the $p < 0.01$ level and staff size at the $p < 0.1$ level.

Table 20: Regression of Change in Newspaper Coverage and Change in Public Works Budget, 2005-2010 (Unstandardized Coefficients)

| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Content analysis | 0.51*** (0.17) | 0.47*** (0.17) | 0.93*** (0.21) |
| Local ownership | | 2.17 (2.56) | 1.30 (2.63) |
| Market saturation (log) | | 1.24 (1.63) | 0.30 (1.75) |
| Web coverage | | -0.51 (1.53) | -1.09 (1.57) |
| Staff size | | -0.24** (0.10) | -0.17* (0.10) |
| Constant | 5.32*** (1.29) | 12.87** (6.28) | 11.70* (6.31) |
| R² | 0.07*** | 0.10** | 0.18*** |
| Adjusted R² | 0.06 | 0.07 | 0.14 |
| N | 138 | 143 | 122 |
| Standard error of estimate | 13.52 | 13.51 | 12.93 |

NOTE: Standard errors are in parenthesis

Model 1: No control variables

Model 2: Control variables with all regions

Model 3: Control variables excluding region 4.9

* Significant at the 0.10 level (2-tailed)

** Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

*** Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Beyond the examination of the statistics, the coverage of issues surrounding public works got at the heart of what local governments provide to the community. Chief Billy Goldfeder, chairman of the Fairfax, Va.-based International Association of Fire Chiefs' Safety, Health and Survival Section, said, "Local government was created in its most basic form to provide services to those paying the taxes" (Brock, 2009). Fundamental to those services in most towns includes everything from road maintenance to construction of public buildings to sewage treatment and water purification. Like other areas studied, various topics within the realm of public works warranted coverage. For example, in Oklahoma City, the second largest city in this study, Public Works Director Dennis Clowers told a local newspaper that major personnel cuts and service reductions, likely graffiti removal, have become more

possible. “At some point, your budget can get to the point where you simply don’t have the dollars to employ the same number of people,” said City Councilmember Gary Marrs in the article. “It’s going to be a tough year. There are going to be some extremely tough decisions to make, and unfortunately [they are] going to include personnel” (Barkin, 2010).

Coverage of other topics did not necessarily include coverage of budget activities but included everything from the construction of a sewage treatment plant to informing the citizens of Roanoke, Va. about environmental issues in their community related to emissions from a sewage treatment plant. Without newspaper coverage of the topic, it is unlikely the citizens would have ever have known there was a potential problem. *Roanoke Times* reporter Laurence Hammack (2010) wrote, “Water and sewer treatment plants in Bedford and Franklin counties have been cited by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality for excessive releases of copper, zinc and nickel. The Western Virginia Water Authority, which operates a water treatment plant in Bedford County, was fined \$3,500 for discharging too much copper into Falling Creek. In Franklin County, the Ferrum Water and Sewage Authority was fined \$2,200 for too much zinc and nickel in the treated wastewater that it released into Storey Creek.” Maybe Hammack’s work is not the coverage that is going to win a reporter a Pulitzer Prize, but it is exactly the kind of civic journalism the local citizens depend on so they can know what is happening in their community.

Coverage of public works in local government presented two challenges: the long-term nature of the projects and the mandatory nature of the work. Many cities included large public works projects in budgets outside the general fund or departmental budgets, including them instead in large, capital projects that spanned over years or decades and that were beyond the scope of this study. Often a governing board obligated the community to years and years of taxes or bond payments that the current administration was obligated to follow. Hence, there was often little discussion of the items and little media coverage of them unless something went wrong. Public works projects also presented a challenge for local

governments because they are necessitated by external conditions and are mandatory. Snow removal, for example, was included in the budgets of towns in northern states. While the council may want to remove this from the budget, they might also find themselves with impassable streets and sidewalks and an irate, paralyzed community. Just as the federal government is obligated to pay, for example, social security payments, and just as cutting back on those payments would not be popular, local governments find many public works projects obligatory.

The Independent Variables

Policy change does not occur in a vacuum. As Rogers and Dearing (1988) noted in their model interpersonal communication, real-world indicators can have an influence upon the agenda and the policy outcomes. With a focus on the media effects of policy outcomes, this research used four independent variables, summarized in table 21, to help account for changes in the policy: local ownership of the newspaper, market saturation (circulation / population), addition of Web coverage and size of the staff.

Table 21: Regression of Change in Newspaper Coverage and Change in Budget, 2005-2010, Excluding Subregion 4.9, (Unstandardized Coefficients)

| | Budget Total | Economic Development | Parks and Recreation | Public Safety | Public Works |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Content analysis | -0.00 (0.00) | 0.06 (0.07) | 0.34*** (0.05) | 0.25* (0.14) | 0.93*** (0.21) |
| Local ownership | 1.72 (2.86) | 0.42 (0.57) | 0.46 (0.64) | 6.36** (3.04) | 1.30 (2.63) |
| Market saturation (log) | -3.88** (1.90) | -0.29 (0.37) | 0.08 (0.42) | 1.84 (2.04) | 0.30 (1.75) |
| Web coverage | -3.83** (1.71) | -0.16 (0.34) | -0.57 (0.38) | 1.13 (1.85) | -1.09 (1.57) |
| Staff size | -0.11 (0.11) | -0.01 (0.02) | -0.06** (0.02) | -0.22* (0.12) | -0.17* (0.10) |
| Constant | 134.74*** (7.02) | 0.82 (1.34) | 3.57** (1.52) | 8.10 (7.38) | 11.70* (6.31) |
| R | 0.29* | 0.13 | 0.56*** | 0.29* | 0.42*** |
| R² | 0.08 | 0.02 | 0.32 | 0.08 | 0.18 |
| Adjusted R² | 0.04 | -0.03 | 0.29 | 0.04 | 0.14 |
| N | 121 | 122 | 122 | 122 | 122 |
| Standard error of estimate | 14.21 | 2.76 | 3.13 | 15.16 | 12.93 |

NOTE: Standard errors are in parenthesis

*Correlation is significant at the 0.10 level (2-tailed)
 **Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
 ***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Size of staff

H2: The size of a newspaper's staff will correlate positively with policy change. The larger the size of the staff, the larger the positive correlation.

When examining the budget by department, the size of the staff had a statistically significant impact on the changes in the budget, at least at the $p < 0.1$ level, in three of the departments: parks and recreation, public safety and public works. It had no impact when the budget was considered as an aggregate and it had no impact on economic development (but neither did any of the other variables). With an increase in the newspaper staff size, the town's budget sizes goes down, on average, by 0.22 people for public safety, 0.17 people for public works and 0.06

people for parks, recreation and tourism. As the newspaper's staff size increases, the town's budget decreases. Of course, it could mean that a larger newspaper staff is pushing for budget cuts and limited government rather than tax and fee increases as towns are forced to look for additional revenue sources to prevent budget cuts as other sources of funding dry up.

After examining industry trends, this relationship is most likely a reflection of the downsizing of newspapers during the last decade. That is, newspaper staff sizes are decreasing over time and budgets are still, generally increasing, so the relationship between the two is due more to external factors than any of the factors in this study. Still it is significant and worth noting.

It is also worth noting larger newspapers are cutting more personnel by sheer number and as a percentage of their staff. For example, in a single month in 2008, the *Palm Beach Post* cut 130 people from its staff of 300, 43 percent (Walton, 2010). The 170 people left, despite the mantra of doing more with less, simply could not do the volume of reporting the staff once did even though the budgets of the towns in this study, towns that are presumably similar to Palm Beach, increased by 21 percent between 2007 and 2008 as the population increased by 1 percent.

The papers in this study cut one-fifth of their staffs in the five-year period between 2005 and 2010 slightly less than the one-fourth of the cuts that the American Society of Newspaper Editors demonstrated since 2001. ASNE said 13,700 jobs had been lost nationwide since 2007 demonstrating the potential economic impact of the downsizing of the newspaper industry. As staff members are being asked to do more with less, inevitably more generic copy from news services instead of local reporters is creeping into what little news space remains. Smaller staffs have less time to investigate the actions of government officials, ceasing to fulfill one of the primary roles of the news media. So, even as the town's budget increases due to population increases or other factors, newspaper staff sizes decrease.

Market saturation

H3: The higher the quality of the newspaper as measured through circulation, the higher the correlation between local coverage and policy change.

Of the 144 newspapers used in this study, only nine saw an increase in circulation between 2005 and 2010. Only 10 saw an increase in market saturation. With an increase in the (log of) newspaper market saturation, the town's budget goes down on average by 3.88 when analyzed against the aggregate budget. Market saturation seemed to have no impact on the departmental budgets. As the budgets for the towns increase, the newspaper's market saturation decreases. Given the time period of the study, crossing the time of the Great Recession, it could be that external factors were so strong that regardless of any media coverage, the budgets were going to decline and that those declines came in areas of the budget not a part of this study. Or it could be that media outlets were helping convey a public opinion against increased taxes and fees — as citizens in some foreign countries have done — arguing instead for the downsizing of government.

Web presence

H4: Local newspapers with a Web presence will show a higher correlation between local coverage and policy change.

Newspapers are making more use of their online presence not simply to republish content in the print edition but to supplement it with social media such as Facebook and Twitter. The majority of adults (66 percent) still say they prefer reading a printed version of the newspaper to an online version (Rasmussen Reports, 2012). The vast majority of newspapers in the study (73 percent) not only have a website that is updated at least daily but also make use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter to distribute their news. Mark Zuckerberg started Facebook in 2004; Twitter came online in 2006, both since work on this study began. Both have had a profound impact on news media reporting.

The data in this study indicated that, at least when looking at the total budget, with an increase in the use of social media, the town's budget goes down. The direction of change on the variable is interesting. The variable for Web coverage was categorical: 0 indicated no Web coverage (no papers fell into this category); 1 indicated a static website (no papers fell into this category); 2 indicated a website that was updated only as frequently as the print edition with no social media component (12 percent of papers in the study); 3 indicated a website that was updated more frequently than the print edition with no social media component (15 percent of papers in the study); and 4 indicated a website that was updated more frequently than the print edition with a social media component (73 of the papers in the study). In short, more online coverage, including a social media component, resulted in a decrease in the town's budget. The result could be due to other external factors as indicated with market saturation, but, all other things being equal, it is worth noting that both market saturation of the print edition and online coverage were both statistically significant and correlated with a decline in the overall budget of the cities studied even if the relationship with each individual department in the budget is less clear.

Ownership

H5a: Locally owned newspapers will have a stronger correlation between amount of coverage of local issues and policy change than newspapers owned by national chains.

The study also showed that local newspapers are following the trends of their larger counterparts, being purchased by larger and larger chains. Chains, 25 of them in all, such as Cox Media Group, Freedom Communications and Lee Enterprises, McClatchy, owned all of the papers in the study. Still, 44 (31 percent) of the papers remained under local ownership, about 10 percent more than the local ownership of papers demonstrated by Eli Noam in his 2009 research. While some research has shown that locally owned newspaper behave differently than those owned by chains,

an avenue of further research would be to systematically determine whether locally owned newspapers cover local governments in a similar fashion to newspapers owned by conglomerates and what impact that might have on the functioning of government officials.

Except with public safety, local ownership showed no relationship with changes in the town's budget. However, the relationship between local ownership and the dependent variable, budget change, was significant ($p < 0.05$) with a coefficient of 6.36 for public safety. As the categorical variable for ownership (0 = non-locally owned; 1 = locally owned) approaches 1, the town's budget goes up on average by 6.36. While the budget increase affirms the hypothesis, it also points out that the value of local ownership warrants further examination as to why local ownership has any impact on budget change at all much less only on one area of the policy outcomes.

H5b: Local newspapers owned by the same company as the local television station will show a higher correlation between local coverage and policy change.

As it turned out, data related to this variable was nearly impossible to obtain and it was subsequently deleted from the study. The Telecommunications Act of 1996, the first major overhaul of telecommunications law in almost 62 years, changed the landscape of media ownership by allowing any communication business to compete in any market against one another. Prior to 1996, there were major restrictions that prevented owners of media outlets from owning other media outlets in the same market. The goal was to prevent a monopoly in the marketplace of media opinion. Now, only 15 years later, it is common for newspapers and television stations (and radio stations and websites for that matter) to be owned by the same company. As indicated in previous discussion, it is also common for television stations to get their stories out of local newspapers owned by the same company and vice versa, limiting the diversity of opinion in a single market.

Conclusion

This research set out to examine the impact of newspaper coverage on policy outcomes. Given that prior research validated the correlation between newspaper coverage and public opinion, determining what impact newspaper coverage has on policy will provide bureaucrats, politicians as well as reporters and editors with, at least, guidance as to the outer boundary of media impact at the local level. While media outlets may have a strong impact on public opinion, they have significantly less impact on local government policy change. Certainly the study indicates there is an outer boundary to the impact that local newspapers can have. In addition, the impact that media outlets have varies within the budget itself with media outlets having an impact more on public works and parks and recreation with almost no impact on public safety and no impact on economic development. Further, geography matters at least when it comes to changes in the budget with the Great Recession hitting Western states harder. Local ownership positively relates to changes in the town budget. Finally, (log of) market saturation, Web coverage (including social media) and staff size seem to have a negative correlation with changes in the budget over time. With an increase in these independent variables, the town's budget goes down on average. These relationships warrant further examination as discussed in the next chapter.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Introduction

When researchers set out to discuss the impact of media coverage on public opinion in 1973, newspaper circulation was still climbing, a satellite broadcast for an Elvis Presley show live from Hawaii, Aloha from Hawaii, on January 14, 1973 reportedly reached up to 1.5 billion viewers globally, still one of the largest television audiences for a television show, and the Internet had not grown much past the four-node network connecting three California universities and one in Utah established four years earlier. In the subsequent four decades, millions of people watch SuperBowl games ever year, billions of people use the Internet every day and agenda-setting confirmed that mass media outlets can have influence public opinion on a great variety of subjects. However, few of those studies examined local governments and the ones that did showed an impact on specific cases that were hard to generalize. Still fewer studies examined anything beyond public opinion such as the media's impact on policy outcomes. This study set out to add to the literature and our understanding of agenda-setting by examining the impact of local newspapers on policy outcomes in cities nationwide. Through a greater understanding of the agenda-setting role of the media, administrators and reporters can better understand the factors that influence changes in policy.

Of course, the factors that influence policy changes are complex. The model proposed for this study acknowledged intervening variables such as the market saturation of the newspaper, whether or not the paper was locally owned or not, how the paper used online media to supplement the print edition and where the town being studied was located. It also acknowledged that policy change does not happen a vacuum. Media coverage leads to changes in public opinion, which leads to changes in the political agenda, which leads to changes in policy. Those changes in policy, might, in turn, lead to more media coverage influenced as well by interpersonal communication between politicians, bureaucrats and their constituents and events

that occur independent of media coverage experienced by politicians, bureaucrats and citizens in the 143 communities selected for study representing all regions of the United States. This research, summarized in table 22, affirms the ideas introduced by John Kingdon (2003) who states that policy is changed when a group of factors coalesce into a window of opportunity for policy change. It affirms the ideas of Baumgartner and Jones (1993) who showed that policy change might occur when waves of enthusiasm push policy change to the fore. And certainly it affirms the ideas of Cohen, March and Olsen (1972) who discussed how, from a garbage can of ideas, policy change can occur depending on the mix of the cans available, the labels attached to the alternative cans, what garbage is being produced and on the speed with which garbage is collected and removed from the scene. It also adds to the concepts they introduced.

Table 22: Summary of Findings

| Hypothesis | Confirmed? | Findings |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| H1 | Yes/Limited | Local coverage and policy change are positively correlated over a five-year period in certain areas of the budget. |
| H2 | No | Staff size was negatively correlated with budget change. As the budget increased, staff size decreased, probably due to external factors. |
| H3 | No | Market saturation was negatively correlated with market saturation, probably due to external factors. |
| H4 | No | As the budget increases, the type and amount of online coverage decreases. However, community newspapers do seem to be increasing their online presence through the websites and use of social media. |
| H5a | Yes/Limited | Local ownership had no impact on policy change except in the area of public safety. |
| H5b | Undetermined | It was not possible to determine what television stations and newspapers had common owners partly due to rapid changes in the market. |

Coverage and policy change

H1: Local coverage and policy change will be positively correlated.

Of the hundreds of studies on agenda setting, mostly at the national level and mostly of public opinion, researchers often found extremely high correlations, as high as 1.0 (Maher, 1996). Over time, the concept of agenda setting, that media coverage influences public opinion, became accepted. Subsequent studies took this concept one step farther, examining the relationship between media coverage, public opinion and policy outcomes. Mortensen and Serritzlew (2006), for example, examined in the relationship between media coverage and changes in the budgets of 191 Danish municipalities over a 13-year period to examine the outer boundaries of media influence. “If public spending is not affected by the media, then this is an empirical finding that tells us something important about the outer limits of media effects.” They reported that the media may affect political discussions and certain political decisions, but the budgets and broader policy priorities remain largely unaffected.

Similarly, this study examined the impact of media coverage not on public opinion but on policy change. In findings similar to those of Mortensen and Serritzlew, this study finds that media have almost no impact on budget changes in the short-term (one year) and minimal impact over a five-year period. Even when the media coverage does impact policy change, it does not do so equally across all areas of the budget. Instead, of the four areas studied, media influence was greatest in parks and recreation and public works, not public safety or economic development. In addition, findings show that the budgets of the Western states (California, Oregon and Washington) increased at a rate slower than the rest of the country. As other research indicated, California, due to decades of over-spending and poor fiscal management, bore the brunt of the economic downturn.

Size of Staff

H2: The size of a newspaper's staff will be correlated positively with policy change. The larger the size of the staff, the larger the positive correlation.

The size of the staff had a significant impact on the outcome in three departments: parks and recreation, public safety and public works. As the budget increased, the staff size was predicted to be lower, something, that did not initially seem correct. However, due to massive cuts in newspaper staffs over the last decade, the exact relationship between staff size and policy outcomes was difficult to determine using the information in this study.

This did, however, open another avenue for research on the decline of local reporting, a decline that has been documented through numerous case studies as have the decline in investigative reporting and decline in reporting on governmental issues. As Mary Walton (2010) reports, "Kicked out, bought out or barely hanging on, investigative reporters are a vanishing species in the forests of dead tree media and missing in action on Action News. I-Teams are shrinking or, more often, disappearing altogether. Assigned to cover multiple beats, multitasking backpacking reporters no longer have time to sniff out hidden stories, much less write them. In Washington, bureaus that once did probes have shrunk, closed and consolidated." As she reports, the Investigative Reporters and Editors association saw membership fall to a 10-year low. The Tribune Company, which owns the *Los Angeles Times*, used to have dozens of investigative reporters in Washington. It now has one. And with all the downsizing of news staffs across the country today, there just are not enough reporters to probe into topics such as the effects of lobbyists in statehouses across the country or anti-terrorism strategies in local communities or discrimination by local law-enforcement officials. Those stories just take too much time. As *Palm Beach Post* reporter Tom Dubocq, who accepted a buyout offer that included health benefits for life after winning recognition for a series of reports of local corruption that had three county commissioners and assorted others put in jail, said when reporters like him leave, "The bad guys get away with stuff."

Market Saturation

H3: The higher the quality of the newspaper as measured through circulation, the higher the correlation between local coverage and policy change.

As the budgets for the towns increase, the newspaper's market saturation decreases, disproving this hypothesis. Indeed, market saturation and policy change are negatively correlated probably due to external factors including the downsizing of most newspapers worldwide. The papers in this study showed a decline similar to the decline of all newspapers nationwide, reaffirming what the popular press has been reporting for some time — newspaper circulation, and hence market saturation, is down. This steady decline does not bode well for even local newspapers which might have been somewhat immune to the declining circulation because they are one of few sources for local news in a community without other media. There may come a time when printed newspapers decline in circulation so far that their impact on public opinion, the political agenda and policy change is imperceptible. The impact of local newsletters, e-mail distribution lists, word of mouth, social media and even information distributed primarily online by the local government itself warrant further research. As indicated in the initial model, these external factors may play a significant role in policy change over time as local newspapers.

Web Presence

H4: Local newspapers with a Web presence will show a higher correlation between local coverage and policy change.

This study demonstrated that newspapers are making more use of their online presence not just to republish content in the print edition but to supplement it with social media such as Facebook and Twitter. Both have had a profound impact on news media reporting but the data in this research show an online media have little impact on policy changes and when they did have an impact, it was only on the aggregated budget over a five-year period. Only within the last few years have studies

been published examining the impact of the social media on various aspects of reporting and more work is needed in this area.⁹ For example, as a media outlet, how can comments on Facebook or Twitter influence the opinions of citizens, politicians and bureaucrats? And what impact do social media outlets have on policy outcomes? In short, what is the agenda-setting effect of the social media? Further, how can local governments themselves use social media to inform public opinion and policy outcomes?

Recent research by the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism showed that Americans now tend to get their national and international news from the Internet more so than newspapers. "Among all adults, the Internet is either the most popular source or tied with newspapers as the most popular source for five of the 16 local topics in the survey—from restaurants and businesses to housing, schools and jobs." And citizens seem to be using the Internet more and more for information about their local communities. Among the 79 percent of Americans who are online, the Internet is an even more significant source for local news and information." However, while they're using the Internet, they are not using the websites of local newspapers or televisions to get their information. "In none of our topics did more than 6 percent of respondents say they depended on the website of a legacy news organization. In addition 5 percent said they relied on a TV station website when there was breaking news in their community, and 3 percent relied on local TV websites for local political news. After that, TV news websites barely registered" (Rosenstiel, et. al., 2011). This warrants further investigation.

⁹ Two of the papers presented at the March 8-10, 2012 Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Southwest Colloquium discussed the use of social media in Middle Eastern protests and the 2011 Egyptian revolution and showed the impact that Twitter, in particular, can have on public opinion leading, ultimately, to political revolution.

Ownership

H5a: Locally owned newspapers will have a stronger correlation between amount of coverage of local issues and policy change than newspapers owned by national chains.

The percentage of papers in this study that were locally owned was higher than other studies revealed was the national average and still local ownership seemed to have little impact on policy change. The effects of local ownership, however, warrant further investigation particularly in a case-study examination of individual papers that have a stronger influence on policy change and are locally owned. In addition, why local ownership seems to be more strongly correlated to public safety warrants specific examination. Are local owners more interested in public safety because it is likely to impact their personal safety?

H5b: Local newspapers owned by the same company as the local television station will show a higher correlation between local coverage and policy change.

While this was cut from the study, the impact of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 specifically warrants further examination as to its impact on local newspapers. “[N]ewsstands still hold rows and rows of newspapers and magazines on a variety of subjects, while cable television channels continue to multiply as do movies and records. They are likely, however, to be variations of the same themes and messages” (Golding and Murdock, 1996). Because of this, officials may find it difficult to get their messages out and citizens may find it difficult to find a variety of viewpoints so they can make educated decisions on local policies.

Limitations

As with any research project, this one had its limitations. First and foremost of these was the method of data collection. No pre-existing data set existed either for the content analysis portion of the study of local newspapers or the budgetary data of

local communities. While the EBSCO Newspaper Source Plus database did provide an efficient manner for searching the content of local newspapers, it was time-consuming and limited in scope. Over time, more newspapers will move their entire archive on to their own websites increasing the possibilities for research. In addition, there remains no central clearinghouse for local government budgets so each town's budget had to be obtained and analyzed. This made it more apparent why the studies that do exist are primarily short-term studies of one town or case studies of isolated events. Further, since there are different methods of budgeting and the budgets take different forms, determining which areas were included in the areas studied remained a challenge even while remaining consistent for each town if not between towns. Although the final study sample includes only 143 towns in all nine regions and 43 states, it includes a content analysis of tens of thousands of stories over at least three years if not more. Some towns made their budgets available for 10 years or more, but two towns refused to disclose their budgets at all

A second limitation of this research included the timeframe of the study, 2005-2010. The time frame was chosen to maximize the amount of data available for each town and each media outlet in comparison to several one-year periods. However, in the middle of this timeframe lies 2008, the beginning of the Great Recession. Although town budgets did not appear to be showing the impact of the Great Recession until 2011 or 2012, the economic downturn inevitably had an impact on politicians, bureaucrats, reporters and editors even when they were not faced with short-term decisions about what to cut from the budget. In addition, the economic downturn and changes in the mass media industry resulted in smaller staffs and fewer news outlets. Beyond the scope of this research, other researchers have demonstrated that smaller staffs and fewer news outlets results in less coverage of local government, particularly investigative work.

Finally, the methodology itself presented challenges. Correlations do not show direction of causation. In this short term, other pieces of literature have shown that media coverage precedes public opinion change and policy outcomes at least in

isolated instances. However, the significant piece of this study examined policy outcomes over a five-year period. Inevitably over that length of time multiple factors will help bureaucrats and politicians determine policy outcomes, only one of which will be media coverage. Indeed, media coverage might follow the policy process as much as precede it. Other studies will need to address this concern at the local level.

Areas for Future Research

If nothing else, significant and long-term research always reveals more areas for additional research. This study was no exception and some of the ideas for future research have been discussed above in relation to the specific hypotheses discussed in this research. In general, however, other ideas for future research have become apparent, including examining the budgetary changes in California specifically to examining data pre- and post-Great Recession.

The first area that seems to warrant additional research is the impact of the Great Recession. While media outlets may have some influence on budgetary changes, massive drops in revenue will clearly have a great impact. While politicians and bureaucrats may not want to cut the public safety budget, for example, and media coverage may indicate that the citizens do not want the public safety budget, as the largest piece of the local government budget, local officials may have no other choice but to use forced retirements, cuts in pension plans and ultimately layoffs and cuts in service to balance the budget. The way the Great Recession is included in the study may also warrant some examination especially if data pre-Great Recession can be compared to data post-Great Recession, data from 2005-2008 (pre) compared to 2008-2011 (during) compared to 2011-2014 (post), for example. In this study, several one-year periods showed no relationship between media coverage and policy change. Using existing theories as a guide, when the time-period of examination was increased to five years, some significant relationships were revealed. The time frame in which the media begins to have an impact warrants further examination. Is it two years? Three years? What happens beyond five years? Further, with the data

collected over a 10-year period, a true time-series analysis of the changes in the budget and the changes in media coverage may help gain more insights into the impact media outlets have over time.

Related to examining the impact of the Great Recession on local communities and local media outlets, the specific impact on subregion 4.9 (California specifically) and by subregion 4.9 generally warrants further examination. As discussed in chapter five, legislation passed in California back in the 1970s has seemingly resulted in California becoming a stalemated society as citizens value stability over expansion. As the results show, California is clearly “different” from the other states studied and the impact those differences have on the cities and towns in California specifically warrants further examination. Such a study may also provide, on an isolated basis, for some further examination of the direction of causation between media coverage and policy changes as modern politicians and bureaucrats contend with legal constraints (from California’s Proposition 13 passed in 1978 to Proposition 1A passed in 2004) that often prevent them from making substantive changes in the way the government agencies within the state operate (Gamage, 2009). Some case studies of specific towns that have seen drastic budget cuts or significant changes in the media outlets in their local area (such as the closure of a newspaper) may provide additional insight into what truly influences policy change at the local level.

In addition to the Great Recession that took place since work on this study began changing the way cities and towns operate, media outlets have changed dramatically in the last five years. In 2004, Facebook came online. As of February 2012, Facebook has 845 million active users (Protalinski, 2012). In 2006, Twitter came online. By 2011, 300 million people used Twitter, often for spot news updates. These two online services changed the media landscape and certainly warrant additional research. In particular, these two services, combined with websites, allow local governments to quickly, efficiently and inexpensively disseminate massive amounts of information in a timely fashion. Governments have already begun to use these services for breaking news alerts, everything from weather alerts to traffic jams

to public safety notices. More like in-house public relations agencies, they are disseminating notes from committee meetings online and engaging citizens in interactive polls, all without having to depend on mass media outlets as gatekeepers.

The websites of the media outlets too have changed in the time studied as well. About a decade ago, newspapers relied on third-party vendors such as EBSCO to archive their stories online. Or they just maintained a print archive but no online archive. Now, thanks to changes in technology that have made archiving less expensive and seamlessly integrated into the workflow, more and more newspapers maintain a full archive of the stories published in print and online only on their own websites. This full archive without any external gatekeepers making selections about what to archive or not as EBSCO does will prove even more valuable to researchers.

Of course, print media is not the only media changing. This study excluded television. Indeed, many of the towns in the study had no local television station, instead relying on television coverage from nearby city, often a much larger city. Television stations, too, are making great use of social media and websites in their coverage of local government. Some stations even have a dedicated, second cable channel on which they play things such as entire school board meetings and city council meetings in a local version of CSPAN. What impact this might have on citizen involvement, if any, is unclear. However, the cost to the media outlet and the local government is minimal and it provides citizens an opportunity to observe their government in action. Local news is the next most popular source for weather and breaking news. “It has made itself essential in people’s lives for events happening right now....” However, for political coverage, local television finds itself in head-to-head competition with the local newspaper or its website with the Internet coming in a distant third (Rosenstiel, et. al., 2011).

Some research on agenda setting has even stronger implications for the power of the media (and other forms of communication). New research suggests that the media not only tell us what to think about, but also how to think about it, and, consequently, what to think (McCombs, 1993). In particular, researchers have

introduced the concept of framing, refining agenda setting. There is evidence from research by Gitlin (1980) that the way an object on the agenda is framed can have measurable consequences. “The attributes of an issue emphasized in the news coverage can, for example, directly influence the direction of public opinion.” Given that the media influence at the local level seems to be stronger in specific areas such as parks and recreation and public works, additional research might use the concepts of framing to examine exactly how parks and recreation and public works are portrayed in the media and why such media coverage might have more of an impact on policy outcomes.

As the initial model indicates, factors beyond public opinion and the media influence policy, including interpersonal communication and real-world indicators. Recent research shows the importance of word of mouth, e-mail distribution lists, community newsletters and radio. As governments vamp up their Web presence as well as use of social media, the impact of this public relations tool on policy outcomes also merits examination. While news outlets purport to investigate multiple sides of a story, citing holding government officials accountable for their actions as one of their prime missions, government-run sites have no such obligation. Still, current research shows that local residents do not rely upon information from their own governments even for information about the government itself. “Just 3 percent of adults say they rely on their local government (including both local government websites or visiting offices directly) as the main source of information for both taxes and for local social services, and even fewer cite their local government as a key source for other topics such as community events, zoning and development, and even local government activity” (Rosenstiel, et. al., 2011).

Finally, this research points to several potential areas of study regarding the papers that saw the greatest changes in the past decade and the papers that saw the smallest changes. Similarly, the towns that were able to avoid the budget cuts that other cities faced or the cities that saw the most cuts and how they coped with the

changes. A great deal of the research in agenda setting involves case studies, and the outlier cases identified in this study may warrant further case study investigation.

Conclusion

In the 35 years since researchers first published on agenda setting, they have published hundreds of journal articles and dozens of books on the topic. Indeed, one of the challenges of studying any aspect of agenda setting is trying to absorb the totality of the research. It is, as Gerald Kosicki (1993) said, “an exceedingly complex task.” Just as the study of agenda setting has grown complex, so has agenda setting theory itself.

This research set out to expand our knowledge of agenda setting, given that we know so much about agenda setting, gatekeeping and framing at the national level. Media coverage does have a limited impact on policy changes at the local level, so now researchers can set out to find factors that might influence policy change and administrators and reporters can react appropriately. However, given the limited impact, it is now clear that there is an outer boundary to the impact of media coverage on policy outcomes. Media coverage does not impact policy outcomes over the short term and does not impact all policy areas equally even over the long term. In addition, newspaper staff size and policy change seem to be related although clearly that relationship needs a more in-depth analysis especially in light of the drastic cuts on newspapers staffs in the first decade of the 21st century. Building on this research, research into agenda setting at the local level can expand into other realms including case studies of exceptional incidents, more exploration of the impact of online media, and an acknowledgement that media outlets tell us what to think about and how to think about it even if they do not influence all policy outcomes in the short-term.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

U.S. Regions from the Bureau of the Census

- *Region 1 (Northeast) (19.0% of population)*
Division 1 (New England) Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut
Division 2 (Mid-Atlantic) New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey
- *Region 2 (Midwest) (22.9% of population)*
Division 3 (East North Central) Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio
Division 4 (West North Central) North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri
- *Region 3 (South) (35.6% of population)*
Division 5 (South Atlantic) Delaware, Maryland, District of Columbia, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida
Division 6 (East South Central) Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama
Division 7 (West South Central) Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana
- *Region 4 (West) (22.5% of population)*
Division 8 (Mountain) Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico
Division 9 (Pacific) Alaska, Washington, Oregon, California, Hawaii

Appendix B

Cities

| City | State | Reg. | Fiscal year | Total 2010 budget | Population 2010 |
|---------------------------|-------|------|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Aberdeen | SD | 2.4 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$51,150,495 | 26,091 |
| Albany | NY | 1.2 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$160,077,521 | 97,856 |
| Alton | IL | 2.3 | April 1 - March 31 | \$30,107,828 | 27,865 |
| Amarillo | TX | 3.7 | Oct. 1 - Sept. 30 | \$281,989,157 | 190,695 |
| Athens | GA | 3.5 | July 1 - June 30 | \$193,111,988 | 189,264 |
| Augusta | GA | 3.5 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$76,257,726 | 195,844 |
| Augusta | ME | 1.1 | July 1 - June 30 | \$22,724,342 | 19,136 |
| Bakersfield | CA | 4.9 | July 1 - June 30 | \$165,296,100 | 347,483 |
| Bangor | ME | 1.1 | July 1 - June 30 | \$91,249,559 | 33,039 |
| Barstow | CA | 4.9 | July 1 - June 30 | \$39,547,212 | 22,639 |
| Belleville | IL | 2.3 | May 1 - April 30 | \$24,453,391 | 44,478 |
| Bellingham | WA | 4.9 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$187,967,946 | 80,885 |
| Bend | OR | 4.9 | July 1 - June 30 | | 76,639 |
| Biloxi | MS | 3.6 | Oct. 1 - Sept. 30 | \$61,100,016 | 44,054 |
| Bismarck | ND | 2.4 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$88,865,930 | 61,272 |
| Bloomington | IL | 2.3 | May 1 - April 30 | \$74,394,142 | 76,610 |
| Bloomington | IN | 2.3 | Jan. 1 - Dec.31 | \$88,146,530 | 80,405 |
| Boulder | CO | 4.8 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$230,149,000 | 97,385 |
| Bowling Green | KY | 3.6 | July 1 - June 30 | \$75,453,310 | 58,067 |
| Bradenton | FL | 3.5 | Oct. 1 - Sept. 30 | \$81,917,055 | 49,546 |
| Bridgeport | CT | 1.1 | July 1 - June 30 | \$489,471,659 | 144,229 |
| Buffalo | NY | 1.2 | July 1 - June 30 | \$449,084,124 | 261,310 |
| Burlington | NC | 3.5 | July 1 - June 30 | \$47,450,266 | 49,963 |
| Butte | MT | 4.8 | July 1 - June 30 | \$64,540,277 | 32,996 |
| Cedar Rapids | IA | 2.4 | July 1 - June 30 | \$91,349,040 | 126,326 |
| Charleston | SC | 3.5 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$125,459,621 | 120,083 |
| Charleston | WV | 3.5 | July 1 - June 30 | \$80,276,073 | 51,400 |
| Chattanooga | TN | 3.6 | July 1 - June 30 | \$167,535,000 | 167,674 |
| Cheyenne | WY | 4.8 | July 1 - June 30 | \$51,359,247 | 59,466 |
| Claremont | NH | 1.1 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$15,375,161 | 13,355 |
| Clovis | NM | 4.8 | July 1 - June 30 | \$23,101,701 | 37,775 |
| Columbus | GA | 3.5 | July 1 - June 30 | \$213,922,446 | 189,885 |
| Columbus | OH | 2.3 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$658,277,000 | 787,033 |
| Dayton | OH | 2.3 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$492,178,700 | 141,527 |
| Decatur | AL | 3.6 | Oct. 1 - Sept. 30 | \$53,355,545 | 55,683 |
| Decatur | IL | 2.3 | May 1 - April 30 | \$55,523,722 | 76,122 |
| Destin / Santa Rosa Beach | FL | 3.5 | Oct. 1 - Sept. 31 | \$8,815,210 | 12,305 |
| Dover | DE | 3.5 | July 1 - June 30 | \$177,740,488 | 36,047 |

| | | | | | |
|-------------------|----|-----|-------------------|-----------------|---------|
| Erie | PA | 1.2 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$58,086,027 | 101,786 |
| Escondido | CA | 4.9 | July 1 - June 30 | \$76,242,815 | 143,911 |
| Eugene | OR | 4.9 | July 1 - June 30 | \$516,638,474 | 156,185 |
| Fayetteville | NC | 3.5 | July 1 - June 30 | \$136,657,667 | 200,564 |
| Flagstaff | AZ | 4.8 | July 1 - June 30 | \$175,405,644 | 65,870 |
| Fort Walton Beach | FL | 3.5 | Oct. 1 - Sept. 30 | \$36,066,691 | 19,507 |
| Fort Wayne | IN | 2.3 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$202,827,093 | 253,691 |
| Frederick | MD | 3.5 | July 1 - June 30 | \$114,628,774 | 62,647 |
| Fredericksburg | VA | 3.5 | July 1 - June 30 | \$72,498,490 | 24,286 |
| Grand Forks | ND | 2.4 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$100,304,441 | 66,861 |
| Greeley | CO | 4.8 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$170,188,692 | 92,889 |
| Hackensack | NJ | 1.2 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$85,121,580 | 43,010 |
| Hamilton | OH | 2.3 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$45,618,765 | 62,477 |
| Harlingen | TX | 3.7 | Oct. 1 - Sept. 30 | \$35,789,337 | 64,849 |
| Harrisburg | PA | 1.2 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$193,014,318 | 49,528 |
| Havelock | NC | 3.5 | July 1 - June 30 | \$14,753,094 | 20,735 |
| Hesperia | CA | 4.9 | July 1 - June 30 | \$208,260,739 | 90,173 |
| High Point | NC | 3.5 | July 1 - June 30 | \$102,953,599 | 104,371 |
| Hyannis | MA | 1.1 | July 1 - June 30 | \$150,326,911 | 45,193 |
| Jacksonville | NC | 3.5 | July 1 - June 30 | \$89,524,707 | 76,145 |
| Janesville | WI | 2.3 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$41,417,999 | 63,575 |
| Kennewick | WA | 4.9 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$240,991,134 | 73,917 |
| Kinston | NC | 3.5 | July 1 - June 30 | \$19,146,335 | 21,677 |
| La Crosse | WI | 2.3 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$72,448,555 | 51,357 |
| Lakeland | FL | 3.5 | Oct. 1 - Sept. 31 | \$541,829,808 | 97,422 |
| Lancaster | PA | 1.2 | Jan. 1 - Dec.31 | \$45,866,205 | 59,322 |
| Las Cruces | NM | 4.8 | July 1 - June 30 | \$98,279,141 | 97,618 |
| Lawrence | KS | 2.4 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$164,457,707 | 87,643 |
| Lexington | KY | 3.6 | July 1 - June 30 | \$280,059,550 | 295,803 |
| Lima | OH | 2.3 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$171,433,268 | 38,771 |
| Long Beach | CA | 4.9 | Oct. 1 - Sept. 30 | \$2,548,224,134 | 462,257 |
| Lowell | MA | 1.1 | July 1 - June 30 | \$295,277,718 | 106,519 |
| Lynchburg | VA | 3.5 | July 1 - June 30 | \$154,344,986 | 75,568 |
| Macon | GA | 3.5 | July 1 - June 30 | \$111,700,385 | 91,351 |
| Madison | WI | 2.3 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$239,828,662 | 233,209 |
| Marathon | FL | 3.5 | Oct. 1 - Sept. 30 | \$9,004,140 | 8,297 |
| Marysville | CA | 4.9 | July 1 - June 30 | \$11,127,131 | 12,072 |
| McAllen | TX | 3.7 | Oct. 1 - Sept. 30 | \$96,685,464 | 129,877 |
| Medford | OR | 4.9 | July 1 - June 30 | | 74,907 |
| Mesa | AZ | 4.8 | July 1 - June 30 | \$961,292,000 | 439,041 |
| Middletown | OH | 2.3 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$28,872,208 | 48,694 |
| Monterey | CA | 4.9 | July 1 - June 30 | \$95,025,137 | 27,810 |
| Munster | IN | 2.3 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$13,325,634 | 23,603 |
| Myrtle Beach | SC | 3.5 | July 1 - June 30 | \$138,464,859 | 27,109 |

| | | | | | |
|-----------------|----|-----|--------------------|-----------------|---------|
| Nashua | NH | 1.1 | July 1 - June 30 | \$217,886,342 | 86,494 |
| New Bern | NC | 3.5 | July 1 - June 30 | \$58,106,793 | 29,524 |
| New Haven | CT | 1.1 | July 1 - June 30 | \$464,000,758 | 129,779 |
| New London | CT | 1.1 | July 1 - June 30 | \$97,717,333 | 27,620 |
| Newport News | VA | 3.5 | July 1 - June 30 | \$421,096,000 | 180,719 |
| Norwalk | CT | 1.1 | July 1 - June 30 | \$278,654,619 | 85,603 |
| Ocala | FL | 3.5 | Oct. 1 - Sept. 31 | \$400,441,294 | 56,315 |
| Odessa | TX | 3.7 | Oct. 1 - Sept. 30 | \$160,375,134 | 99,940 |
| Ogden | UT | 4.8 | July 1 - June 30 | \$120,427,750 | 82,825 |
| Oklahoma City | OK | 3.7 | July 1 - June 30 | \$323,508,505 | 579,999 |
| Olympia | WA | 4.9 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$102,760,638 | 46,478 |
| Omaha | NE | 2.4 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$280,838,189 | 408,958 |
| Orangeburg | SC | 3.5 | Oct. 1 - Sept. 30 | \$20,580,915 | 13,964 |
| Owensboro | KY | 3.6 | July 1 - June 30 | \$58,344,914 | 57,265 |
| Paducah | KY | 3.6 | July 1 - June 30 | \$53,699,425 | 25,024 |
| Panama City | FL | 3.5 | Oct. 1 - Sept. 30 | \$65,121,772 | 36,484 |
| Peoria | IL | 2.3 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$125,426,279 | 115,007 |
| Port Charlotte | FL | 3.5 | Oct. 1 - Sept. 30 | \$114,174,768 | 54,392 |
| Portales | NM | 4.8 | July 1 - June 30 | \$7,632,298 | 12,280 |
| Porterville | CA | 4.9 | July 1 - June 30 | \$21,851,120 | 54,165 |
| Portland | ME | 1.1 | July 1 - June 30 | \$119,450,177 | 66,194 |
| Pueblo | CO | 4.8 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$67,909,962 | 106,595 |
| Reading | PA | 1.2 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$64,944,810 | 88,082 |
| Roanoke | VA | 3.5 | July 1 - June 30 | \$257,042,000 | 97,032 |
| Rochester | MN | 2.4 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$57,785,377 | 106,769 |
| Rochester | NY | 1.2 | July 1 - June 30 | \$452,153,500 | 210,565 |
| Rock Hill | SC | 3.5 | July 1 - June 30 | \$49,402,314 | 66,154 |
| Salina | KS | 2.4 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$69,721,072 | 47,707 |
| San Luis Obispo | CA | 4.9 | July 1 - June 30 | \$71,015,500 | 45,119 |
| Santa Barbara | CA | 4.9 | July 1 - June 30 | \$252,626,441 | 88,410 |
| Santa Fe | NM | 4.8 | July 1 - June 30 | \$258,110,485 | 67,947 |
| Savannah | GA | 3.5 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$171,938,891 | 136,286 |
| Sedalia | MO | 2.4 | April 1 - March 31 | \$27,641,160 | 21,387 |
| Shelby | NC | 3.5 | July 1 - June 30 | \$61,625,402 | 20,323 |
| South Bend | IN | 2.3 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$196,234,000 | 101,168 |
| Spartanburg | SC | 3.5 | July 1 - June 30 | \$32,013,213 | 37,013 |
| Stamford | CT | 1.1 | July 1 - June 30 | \$439,908,889 | 122,643 |
| State College | PA | 1.2 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$18,626,214 | 42,034 |
| Stockton | CA | 4.9 | July 1 - June 30 | \$291,099,143 | 291,707 |
| Superior | WI | 2.3 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$27,225,329 | 27,244 |
| Tacoma | WA | 4.9 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$440,793,100 | 198,397 |
| Toledo | OH | 2.3 | Jan.1 - Dec. 31 | \$540,654,477 | 287,208 |
| Tucson | AZ | 4.8 | July 1 - June 30 | \$1,270,310,970 | 520,116 |
| Tulsa | OK | 3.7 | July 1 - June 30 | \$585,984,000 | 391,906 |

| | | | | | |
|----------------|----|-----|-------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| Tupelo | MS | 3.6 | Oct. 1 - Sept. 30 | \$138,613,389 | 34,546 |
| Twin Falls | ID | 4.8 | Oct. 1 - Sept. 30 | \$48,306,305 | 44,125 |
| Tyler | TX | 3.7 | Oct. 1 - Sept. 30 | \$58,262,142 | 96,900 |
| Vancouver | WA | 4.9 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$224,064,689 | 161,791 |
| Victoria | TX | 3.7 | Oct. 1 - Sept. 30 | \$125,081,414 | 62,592 |
| Walnut Creek | CA | 4.9 | July 1 - June 30 | \$81,181,117 | 64,173 |
| Waterbury | CT | 1.1 | July 1 - June 30 | \$373,827,596 | 110,366 |
| Waterloo | IA | 2.4 | July 1 - June 30 | \$134,283,376 | 68,406 |
| Watertown | NY | 1.2 | July 1 - June 30 | \$36,095,744 | 27,023 |
| Waterville | ME | 1.1 | July 1 - June 30 | \$36,020,567 | 15,722 |
| Waynesville | NC | 3.5 | July 1 - June 30 | \$26,563,350 | 9,869 |
| West Covina | CA | 4.9 | July 1 - June 30 | \$55,818,087 | 106,098 |
| Wichita | KS | 2.4 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$613,302,463 | 382,368 |
| Wilkes-Barre | PA | 1.2 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$41,121,741 | 41,498 |
| Willoughby | OH | 2.3 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$30,139,349 | 22,268 |
| Winston-Salem | NC | 3.5 | July 1 - June 30 | \$372,517,760 | 229,617 |
| York | PA | 1.2 | Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 | \$97,350,695 | 43,718 |
| Yuma | AZ | 4.8 | July 1 - June 30 | \$241,534,561 | 93,064 |
| Average | | | | \$184,533,311 | 108,052 |
| Median | | | | \$97,998,237 | 68,177 |

| Region | Number | Percent obtained |
|--------|--------|------------------|
| 1.1 | 14 | 100% |
| 1.2 | 12 | 63% |
| 2.3 | 20 | 80% |
| 2.4 | 11 | 100% |
| 3.5 | 35 | 95% |
| 3.6 | 8 | 100% |
| 3.7 | 8 | 100% |
| 4.8 | 15 | 88% |
| 4.9 | 21 | 100% |

Count 144 of 160

Appendix C

Newspapers

| Newspaper | City | State | Circulation 2010 | Market saturation | Staff size |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>American News</i> | Aberdeen | SD | 15,258 | 58.5% | 15 |
| <i>Times Union</i> | Albany | NY | 68,114 | 69.6% | 20 |
| <i>Telegraph</i> | Alton | IL | 22,873 | 82.1% | 17 |
| <i>Amarillo Globe-News</i> | Amarillo | TX | 39,276 | 20.6% | 8 |
| <i>Athens-Banner Herald</i> | Athens | GA | 23,853 | 12.6% | 16 |
| <i>Augusta Chronicle</i> | Augusta | GA | 66,335 | 33.9% | 22 |
| <i>Kennebec Journal</i> | Augusta | ME | 12,862 | 67.2% | 13 |
| <i>Bakersfield Californian</i> | Bakersfield | CA | 49,414 | 14.2% | 22 |
| <i>Bangor Daily News</i> | Bangor | ME | 57,245 | 173.3% | 30 |
| <i>Desert Dispatch</i> | Barstow | CA | 3,259 | 14.4% | 11 |
| <i>Belleville News-Democrat</i> | Belleville | IL | 50,967 | 114.6% | 19 |
| <i>Bellingham Herald</i> | Bellingham | WA | 19,277 | 23.8% | 18 |
| <i>Bulletin</i> | Bend | OR | 33,798 | 44.1% | 23 |
| <i>Sun Herald</i> | Biloxi | MS | 37,817 | 85.8% | 19 |
| <i>Bismarck Tribune</i> | Bismarck | ND | 26,129 | 42.6% | 12 |
| <i>Pantagraph</i> | Bloomington | IL | 39,333 | 51.3% | 30 |
| <i>Herald-Times</i> | Bloomington | IN | 28,408 | 35.3% | 17 |
| <i>Daily Camera</i> | Boulder | CO | 26,698 | 27.4% | 9 |
| <i>Bowling Green Daily News</i> | Bowling Green | KY | 22,062 | 38.0% | 20 |
| <i>Bradenton Herald</i> | Bradenton | FL | 41,120 | 83.0% | 11 |
| <i>Connecticut Post</i> | Bridgeport | CT | 46,388 | 32.2% | 24 |
| <i>Buffalo News</i> | Buffalo | NY | 170,079 | 65.1% | 71 |
| <i>Times-News</i> | Burlington | NC | 24,359 | 48.8% | 16 |
| <i>Montana Standard Gazette</i> | Butte | MT | 13,178 | 39.9% | 9 |
| <i>Post and Courier</i> | Cedar Rapids | IA | 61,247 | 48.5% | 29 |
| <i>Charleston Gazette</i> | Charleston | SC | 81,821 | 68.1% | 43 |
| <i>Charleston Gazette</i> | Charleston | WV | 55,691 | 108.3% | 14 |
| <i>Chattanooga Times/Free Press</i> | Charleston | TN | 81,031 | 48.3% | 35 |
| <i>Wyoming Tribune-Eagle</i> | Chattanooga | WY | 14,340 | 24.1% | 15 |
| <i>Eagle Times</i> | Cheyenne | NH | 7,737 | 57.9% | 11 |
| <i>Clovis News Journal</i> | Claremont | NM | 5,996 | 15.9% | 8 |
| <i>Columbus Ledger-Enquirer</i> | Clovis | GA | 42,875 | 22.6% | 15 |
| <i>Columbus Dispatch</i> | Columbus | OH | 237,357 | 30.2% | 56 |
| <i>Dayton Daily News</i> | Columbus | OH | 99,121 | 70.0% | 40 |
| <i>Decatur Daily</i> | Dayton | AL | 20,312 | 36.5% | 22 |
| <i>Herald and Review</i> | Decatur | IL | 30,263 | 39.8% | 14 |
| <i>Walton Sun</i> | Decatur | FL | 12,000 | 97.5% | 4 |
| <i>Delaware State News</i> | Destin / Santa Rosa Beach | DE | 12,720 | 35.3% | 9 |
| <i>Erie Times-News</i> | Dover | PA | 52,758 | 51.8% | 23 |

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|----|---------|--------|----|
| <i>North County Times</i> | Escondido | CA | 63,565 | 44.2% | 18 |
| <i>Register Guard</i> | Eugene | OR | 66,496 | 42.6% | 41 |
| <i>Fayetteville Observer, The</i> | Fayetteville | NC | 56,238 | 28.0% | 32 |
| <i>Arizona Daily Sun</i> | Flagstaff | AZ | 10,417 | 15.8% | 13 |
| <i>Northwest Florida Daily News</i> | Fort Walton Beach | FL | 28,407 | 145.6% | 13 |
| <i>News-Sentinel</i> | Fort Wayne | IN | 21,543 | 8.5% | 8 |
| <i>Frederick News-Post</i> | Frederick | MD | 35,324 | 56.4% | 23 |
| <i>Free Lance-Star</i> | Fredericksburg | VA | 46,558 | 191.7% | 32 |
| <i>Grand Forks Herald</i> | Grand Forks | ND | 26,001 | 38.9% | 20 |
| <i>Greeley Tribune</i> | Greeley | CO | 18,985 | 20.4% | 16 |
| <i>Record</i> | Hackensack | NJ | 158,637 | 368.8% | 31 |
| <i>Journal-News</i> | Hamilton | OH | 18,699 | 29.9% | 12 |
| <i>Valley Morning Star</i> | Harlingen | TX | 17,332 | 26.7% | 14 |
| <i>Patriot-News</i> | Harrisburg | PA | 77,378 | 156.2% | 22 |
| <i>Havelock News</i> | Havelock | NC | 2,521 | 12.2% | 2 |
| <i>Hesperia Star</i> | Hesperia | CA | 20,000 | 22.2% | 2 |
| <i>High Point Enterprise</i> | High Point | NC | 17,940 | 17.2% | 18 |
| <i>Cape Cod Times</i> | Hyannis | MA | 45,353 | 100.4% | 28 |
| <i>Daily News</i> | Jacksonville | NC | 19,155 | 25.2% | 9 |
| <i>Janesville Gazette</i> | Janesville | WI | 19,010 | 29.9% | 23 |
| <i>Tri-City Herald</i> | Kennewick | WA | 36,048 | 48.8% | 25 |
| <i>Free Press</i> | Kinston | NC | 11,143 | 51.4% | 7 |
| <i>La Crosse Tribune</i> | La Crosse | WI | 34,073 | 66.3% | 13 |
| <i>Ledger</i> | Lakeland | FL | 59,838 | 61.4% | 23 |
| <i>Lancaster New Era</i> | Lancaster | PA | 83,427 | 140.6% | 31 |
| <i>Las Cruces Sun-News</i> | Las Cruces | NM | 20,566 | 21.1% | 10 |
| <i>Journal-World</i> | Lawrence | KS | 17,225 | 19.7% | 24 |
| <i>Lexington Herald-Leader</i> | Lexington | KY | 96,556 | 32.6% | 20 |
| <i>Lima News</i> | Lima | OH | 30,438 | 78.5% | 20 |
| <i>Press-Telegram</i> | Long Beach | CA | 74,250 | 16.1% | 25 |
| <i>Sun</i> | Lowell | MA | 37,508 | 35.2% | 32 |
| <i>News and Advance</i> | Lynchburg | VA | 28,615 | 37.9% | 6 |
| <i>Macon Telegraph</i> | Macon | GA | 48,402 | 53.0% | 16 |
| <i>Wisconsin State Journal</i> | Madison | WI | 98,326 | 42.2% | 55 |
| <i>Florida Keys Keynoter</i> | Marathon | FL | | 0.0% | |
| <i>Appeal-Democrat</i> | Marysville | CA | 17,679 | 146.4% | 14 |
| <i>Monitor</i> | McAllen | TX | 32,013 | 24.6% | 19 |
| <i>Mail Tribune</i> | Medford | OR | 25,916 | 34.6% | 22 |
| <i>Tribune</i> | Mesa | AZ | 49,126 | 11.2% | 16 |
| <i>Middletown Journal</i> | Middletown | OH | 16,249 | 33.4% | 8 |
| <i>Monterey County Herald</i> | Monterey | CA | 26,226 | 94.3% | 8 |
| <i>Times</i> | Munster | IN | 81,062 | 343.4% | |
| <i>Sun News</i> | Myrtle Beach | SC | 46,264 | 170.7% | 12 |
| <i>Telegraph</i> | Nashua | NH | 20,745 | 24.0% | 24 |
| <i>Sun Journal</i> | New Bern | NC | 14,202 | 48.1% | 9 |
| <i>New Haven Register</i> | New Haven | CT | 52,371 | 40.4% | 26 |

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------------|-----------------|----|---------|--------|-------|
| <i>Day</i> | New London | CT | 29,471 | 106.7% | 51 |
| <i>Daily Press</i> | Newport News | VA | 74,825 | 41.4% | 35 |
| <i>Hour</i> | Norwalk | CT | 16,253 | 19.0% | 16 |
| <i>Ocala Star-Banner</i> | Ocala | FL | 44,422 | 78.9% | 16 |
| <i>Odessa American</i> | Odessa | TX | 16,258 | 16.3% | 12 |
| <i>Standard-Examiner</i> | Ogden | UT | 60,884 | 73.5% | 25 |
| <i>Daily Oklahoman</i> | Oklahoma City | OK | 134,175 | 23.1% | 45 |
| <i>Olympian</i> | Olympia | WA | 28,858 | 62.1% | 27 |
| <i>Omaha World-Herald</i> | Omaha | NE | 149,539 | 36.6% | 63 |
| <i>Times and Democrat</i> | Orangeburg | SC | 14,899 | 106.7% | 17 |
| <i>Messenger-Inquirer</i> | Owensboro | KY | 23,902 | 41.7% | 24 |
| <i>Paducah Sun</i> | Paducah | KY | 21,219 | 84.8% | 24 |
| <i>News Herald</i> | Panama City | FL | 23,773 | 65.2% | 15 |
| <i>Journal Star</i> | Peoria | IL | 61,122 | 53.1% | 36 |
| <i>Sun</i> | Port Charlotte | FL | 35,544 | 65.3% | 19 |
| <i>Portales News-Tribune</i> | Portales | NM | 2,955 | 24.1% | 2 |
| <i>Porterville Recorder</i> | Porterville | CA | 9,118 | 16.8% | 13 |
| <i>Portland Press Herald</i> | Portland | ME | 60,149 | 90.9% | 13 |
| <i>Pueblo Chieftain</i> | Pueblo | CO | 46,253 | 43.4% | 25 |
| <i>Reading Eagle</i> | Reading | PA | 58,832 | 66.8% | 35 |
| <i>Roanoke Times</i> | Roanoke | VA | 77,938 | 80.3% | 30 |
| <i>Post-Bulletin</i> | Rochester | MN | 44,494 | 41.7% | 17 |
| <i>Daily Record</i> | Rochester | NY | 145,065 | 68.9% | 34 |
| <i>Herald</i> | Rock Hill | SC | 26,765 | 40.5% | 17 |
| <i>Salina Journal</i> | Salina | KS | 28,300 | 59.3% | 24.71 |
| <i>Tribune</i> | San Luis Obispo | CA | 35,573 | 78.8% | 21 |
| <i>Santa Barbara News-Press</i> | Santa Barbara | CA | 27,044 | 30.6% | 20 |
| <i>Santa Fe New Mexican</i> | Santa Fe | NM | 22,219 | 32.7% | 21 |
| <i>Savannah Morning News</i> | Savannah | GA | 39,656 | 29.1% | 31 |
| <i>Sedalia Democrat</i> | Sedalia | MO | 10,184 | 47.6% | 10 |
| <i>Star</i> | Shelby | NC | 14,164 | 69.7% | 14 |
| <i>South Bend Tribune</i> | South Bend | IN | 67,085 | 66.3% | 35 |
| <i>Herald-Journal</i> | Spartanburg | SC | 36,357 | 98.2% | 22 |
| <i>Advocate</i> | Stamford | CT | 24,949 | 20.3% | 10 |
| <i>Centre Daily Times</i> | State College | PA | 22,510 | 53.6% | 10 |
| <i>Record</i> | Stockton | CA | 49,611 | 17.0% | 17 |
| <i>Telegram</i> | Superior | WI | 8,180 | 30.0% | |
| <i>News Tribune</i> | Tacoma | WA | 88,288 | 44.5% | 13 |
| <i>Blade</i> | Toledo | OH | 93,641 | 32.6% | 70 |
| <i>Arizona Daily Star</i> | Tucson | AZ | 102,405 | 19.7% | 24 |
| <i>Tulsa World</i> | Tulsa | OK | 111,641 | 28.5% | 35 |
| <i>Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal</i> | Tupelo | MS | 33,896 | 98.1% | 23 |
| <i>Times-News</i> | Twin Falls | ID | 18,717 | 42.4% | 13 |
| <i>Tyler Morning Telegraph</i> | Tyler | TX | 31,784 | 32.8% | 22 |
| <i>Columbian</i> | Vancouver | WA | 36,347 | 22.5% | 25 |
| <i>Victoria Advocate</i> | Victoria | TX | 30,228 | 48.3% | 25 |

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|----|----------------|----------|-----------|
| <i>Contra Costa Times</i> | Walnut Creek | CA | 171,100 | 266.6% | 26 |
| <i>Waterbury Republican-American</i> | Waterbury | CT | 46,049 | 41.7% | 19 |
| <i>Waterloo-Cedar Falls Courier</i> | Waterloo | IA | 39,229 | 57.3% | 15 |
| <i>Watertown Daily Times</i> | Watertown | NY | 22,111 | 81.8% | 13 |
| <i>Morning Sentinel</i> | Waterville | ME | 15,434 | 98.2% | 16 |
| <i>Mountaineer</i> | Waynesville | NC | 9,312 | 94.4% | |
| <i>San Gabriel Valley Tribune</i> | West Covina | CA | 33,056 | 31.2% | 9 |
| <i>Wichita Eagle</i> | Wichita | KS | 79,938 | 20.9% | 17 |
| <i>Times Leader</i> | Wilkes-Barre | PA | 34,372 | 82.8% | 13 |
| <i>News-Herald</i> | Willoughby | OH | 34,905 | 156.7% | 17 |
| <i>Winston-Salem Journal</i> | Winston-Salem | NC | 72,186 | 31.4% | 21 |
| <i>York Daily Record</i> | York | PA | 60,708 | 138.9% | 13 |
| <i>Sun</i> | Yuma | AZ | 15,461 | 16.6% | 26 |
| | | | Average | | |
| | | | 44,437 | 1 | 21 |
| | | | Median | 0 | 19 |
| | | | 33,896 | | |

Appendix D

Descriptive Statistics

| | Mean | Std. Deviation | N |
|---------------------------|------------|----------------|-----|
| circ10 | 44,607.32 | 37,335.04 | 142 |
| econdvlp0409 | .9365 | 4.09 | 139 |
| econdvlp0510 | 1.02 | 4.96 | 142 |
| econdvlpbud1009 | -4.91 | 58.88 | 143 |
| econdvlpterms0908 | .19 | 2.92 | 141 |
| locallyowned | .31 | .46 | 143 |
| marketsat10 | .60 | .54 | 143 |
| parksbud0510 | 2.13 | 4.24 | 142 |
| parksbud1009 | -31.51 | 375.74 | 143 |
| parksterms0409 | 4.60 | 6.30 | 139 |
| parksterms0908 | -.20 | 4.20 | 141 |
| pop10 | 108,418.40 | 119,082.66 | 143 |
| pubsafbud0510 | 11.98 | 17.38 | 143 |
| pubsafetybud0910 | -125.23 | 1,520.82 | 143 |
| pubsafetyterms0908 | .50 | 8.41 | 141 |
| pubsafterms0409 | 12.45 | 11.27 | 139 |
| pubworksbud0510 | 7.40 | 14.056 | 142 |
| pubworksbud1009 | -37.61 | 443.12 | 143 |
| pubworksterms0409 | 3.45 | 6.99 | 139 |
| pubworksterms0908 | -.75 | 5.04 | 141 |
| region | 3.18 | 1.30 | 143 |
| staffsize10 | 21.09 | 12.21 | 139 |
| totalbud0510 | 117.97 | 25.81 | 88 |
| totalbud1009 | 695.57 | 8,240.40 | 139 |
| totalterms0409 | 635.57 | 777.49 | 81 |
| totalterms0908 | .26 | .90 | 139 |
| website | 3.60 | .74 | 143 |

Appendix E

Correlations

| | | EDterms0409 | EDbud0510 | PRTterms0409 | PRTbud0510 | PSterms0409 | PSbud0510 | PWterms0409 | PWbud0510 | totalbud0510 | totalterms0409 |
|-----------------------|-----------------|--------------------|------------------|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| EDterms0409 | Pearson Corr. | 1 | 0.107 | .638** | .200* | 0.059 | .180* | .738** | .242** | -0.207 | -.396** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | 0.213 | 0 | 0.019 | 0.49 | 0.034 | 0 | 0.004 | 0.056 | 0 |
| | N | 139 | 138 | 139 | 138 | 139 | 139 | 139 | 138 | 86 | 80 |
| EDbud0510 | Pearson Corr. | 0.107 | 1 | .300** | .194* | 0.135 | .319** | 0.072 | .197* | .305** | 0.078 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.213 | | 0 | 0.021 | 0.114 | 0 | 0.401 | 0.019 | 0.004 | 0.492 |
| | N | 138 | 142 | 138 | 142 | 138 | 142 | 138 | 142 | 88 | 80 |
| PRTterms0409 | Pearson Corr. | .638** | .300** | 1 | .409** | .394** | .363** | .721** | .373** | -.315** | 0.121 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0 | 0 | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.003 | 0.286 |
| | N | 139 | 138 | 139 | 138 | 139 | 139 | 139 | 138 | 86 | 80 |
| PRTbud0510 | Pearson Corr. | .200* | .194* | .409** | 1 | .186* | .653** | .238** | .430** | -0.089 | 0.026 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.019 | 0.021 | 0 | | 0.029 | 0 | 0.005 | 0 | 0.411 | 0.819 |
| | N | 138 | 142 | 138 | 142 | 138 | 142 | 138 | 142 | 88 | 80 |
| PSterms0409 | Pearson Corr. | 0.059 | 0.135 | .394** | .186* | 1 | 0.147 | .316** | 0.147 | -0.01 | .291** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.49 | 0.114 | 0 | 0.029 | | 0.083 | 0 | 0.086 | 0.929 | 0.009 |
| | N | 139 | 138 | 139 | 138 | 139 | 139 | 139 | 138 | 86 | 80 |
| PSbud0510 | Pearson Corr. | .180* | .319** | .363** | .653** | 0.147 | 1 | 0.125 | .553** | 0.047 | -0.079 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.034 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.083 | | 0.143 | 0 | 0.662 | 0.484 |
| | N | 139 | 142 | 139 | 142 | 139 | 143 | 139 | 142 | 88 | 81 |
| PWterms0409 | Pearson Corr. | .738** | 0.072 | .721** | .238** | .316** | 0.125 | 1 | .256** | -.305** | -0.146 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0 | 0.401 | 0 | 0.005 | 0 | 0.143 | | 0.002 | 0.004 | 0.195 |
| | N | 139 | 138 | 139 | 138 | 139 | 139 | 139 | 138 | 86 | 80 |
| PWbud0510 | Pearson Corr. | .242** | .197* | .373** | .430** | 0.147 | .553** | .256** | 1 | .249* | -0.113 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.004 | 0.019 | 0 | 0 | 0.086 | 0 | 0.002 | | 0.019 | 0.319 |
| | N | 138 | 142 | 138 | 142 | 138 | 142 | 138 | 142 | 88 | 80 |
| totalbud0510 | Pearson Corr. | -0.207 | .305** | -.315** | -0.089 | -0.01 | 0.047 | -.305** | .249* | 1 | -0.068 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.056 | 0.004 | 0.003 | 0.411 | 0.929 | 0.662 | 0.004 | 0.019 | | 0.559 |
| | N | 86 | 88 | 86 | 88 | 86 | 88 | 86 | 88 | 88 | 76 |
| totalterms0409 | Pearson Corr. | -.396** | 0.078 | 0.121 | 0.026 | .291** | -0.079 | -0.146 | -0.113 | -0.068 | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0 | 0.492 | 0.286 | 0.819 | 0.009 | 0.484 | 0.195 | 0.319 | 0.559 | |
| | N | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 | 81 | 80 | 80 | 76 | 81 |

Correlations Continued

| | | EDterms0409 | EBud0510 | PRTterms0409 | PRTbud0510 | PSTerms0409 | PSbud0510 | PWterms0409 | PWbud0510 | totalbud0510 | totalterms0409 |
|-----------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| EDbud1009 | Pearson Corr. | 0.051 | 0.017 | 0.076 | 0.038 | -0.049 | 0.055 | 0.074 | 0.047 | -0.024 | 0.045 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.549 | 0.842 | 0.375 | 0.653 | 0.564 | 0.511 | 0.386 | 0.581 | 0.823 | 0.689 |
| | N | 139 | 142 | 139 | 142 | 139 | 143 | 139 | 142 | 88 | 81 |
| EDterms0908 | Pearson Corr. | .482** | -0.03 | .300** | -0.041 | 0.08 | -0.161 | .388** | -0.109 | -0.19 | -0.102 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0 | 0.725 | 0 | 0.632 | 0.35 | 0.057 | 0 | 0.2 | 0.08 | 0.37 |
| | N | 139 | 140 | 139 | 140 | 139 | 141 | 139 | 140 | 86 | 80 |
| parksbud1009 | Pearson Corr. | 0.053 | 0.017 | 0.08 | 0.039 | -0.045 | 0.056 | 0.077 | 0.045 | -0.027 | 0.045 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.536 | 0.845 | 0.347 | 0.641 | 0.597 | 0.504 | 0.367 | 0.592 | 0.801 | 0.692 |
| | N | 139 | 142 | 139 | 142 | 139 | 143 | 139 | 142 | 88 | 81 |
| parksterms0908 | Pearson Corr. | .339** | -0.079 | .482** | -0.006 | .232** | -.194* | .435** | -0.13 | -.327** | -0.013 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0 | 0.354 | 0 | 0.939 | 0.006 | 0.022 | 0 | 0.125 | 0.002 | 0.907 |
| | N | 139 | 140 | 139 | 140 | 139 | 141 | 139 | 140 | 86 | 80 |
| PSbud0910 | Pearson Corr. | 0.052 | 0.017 | 0.079 | 0.04 | -0.047 | 0.058 | 0.076 | 0.046 | -0.027 | 0.044 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.542 | 0.841 | 0.354 | 0.638 | 0.586 | 0.493 | 0.377 | 0.586 | 0.806 | 0.697 |
| | N | 139 | 142 | 139 | 142 | 139 | 143 | 139 | 142 | 88 | 81 |
| PSTerms0908 | Pearson Corr. | 0.059 | -0.109 | 0.101 | -0.123 | .457** | -.204* | .259** | -.180* | -0.003 | -0.03 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.492 | 0.202 | 0.238 | 0.149 | 0 | 0.015 | 0.002 | 0.034 | 0.978 | 0.793 |
| | N | 139 | 140 | 139 | 140 | 139 | 141 | 139 | 140 | 86 | 80 |
| PWbud1009 | Pearson Corr. | 0.051 | 0.018 | 0.078 | 0.041 | -0.046 | 0.06 | 0.074 | 0.051 | -0.024 | 0.044 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.554 | 0.831 | 0.358 | 0.627 | 0.59 | 0.474 | 0.385 | 0.548 | 0.826 | 0.698 |
| | N | 139 | 142 | 139 | 142 | 139 | 143 | 139 | 142 | 88 | 81 |
| PWterms0908 | Pearson Corr. | .232** | -0.054 | .233** | -0.083 | .253** | -.298** | .491** | -.233** | -.341** | 0.046 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.006 | 0.53 | 0.006 | 0.328 | 0.003 | 0 | 0 | 0.006 | 0.001 | 0.683 |
| | N | 139 | 140 | 139 | 140 | 139 | 141 | 139 | 140 | 86 | 80 |
| totalbud1009 | Pearson Corr. | -0.056 | -0.016 | -0.088 | -0.039 | 0.047 | -0.055 | -0.09 | -0.044 | 0.028 | -0.047 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.517 | 0.85 | 0.311 | 0.65 | 0.591 | 0.521 | 0.301 | 0.609 | 0.793 | 0.679 |
| | N | 135 | 138 | 135 | 138 | 135 | 139 | 135 | 138 | 88 | 79 |
| totalterms0908 | Pearson Corr. | -0.026 | -0.038 | 0.027 | -0.015 | 0.007 | -0.066 | 0.01 | -0.094 | -0.009 | 0.059 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.765 | 0.658 | 0.758 | 0.862 | 0.937 | 0.437 | 0.904 | 0.275 | 0.935 | 0.603 |
| | N | 135 | 138 | 135 | 138 | 135 | 139 | 135 | 138 | 86 | 81 |

Correlations Continued

| | | EDterms0409 | EDbud0510 | PRTterms0409 | PRTbud0510 | PSterms0409 | PSbud0510 | PWterms0409 | PWbud0510 | totalbud0510 | totalterms0409 |
|---------------------|-----------------|--------------------|------------------|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| circ10 | Pearson Corr. | -0.079 | -0.013 | -0.146 | -0.142 | -0.103 | -0.072 | -0.12 | -0.138 | -0.018 | -0.036 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.359 | 0.876 | 0.088 | 0.093 | 0.229 | 0.396 | 0.161 | 0.103 | 0.87 | 0.749 |
| | N | 138 | 141 | 138 | 141 | 138 | 142 | 138 | 141 | 87 | 80 |
| locallyowned | Pearson Corr. | .179* | -0.033 | 0.085 | 0.023 | 0.012 | 0.068 | 0.078 | 0.041 | 0.091 | -0.134 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.035 | 0.694 | 0.322 | 0.788 | 0.89 | 0.42 | 0.364 | 0.626 | 0.401 | 0.233 |
| | N | 139 | 142 | 139 | 142 | 139 | 143 | 139 | 142 | 88 | 81 |
| marketsat10 | Pearson Corr. | 0.128 | -0.064 | 0.155 | 0.151 | -0.048 | 0.022 | .167* | 0.041 | -0.089 | -0.094 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.134 | 0.45 | 0.069 | 0.073 | 0.574 | 0.798 | 0.049 | 0.632 | 0.409 | 0.403 |
| | N | 139 | 142 | 139 | 142 | 139 | 143 | 139 | 142 | 88 | 81 |
| pop10 | Pearson Corr. | -.191* | -0.017 | -.223** | -.238** | -0.049 | -0.119 | -.227** | -.194* | 0.067 | 0.028 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.024 | 0.837 | 0.008 | 0.004 | 0.567 | 0.156 | 0.007 | 0.021 | 0.533 | 0.805 |
| | N | 139 | 142 | 139 | 142 | 139 | 143 | 139 | 142 | 88 | 81 |
| region | Pearson Corr. | -0.059 | 0.141 | -0.004 | 0.141 | -0.161 | 0.038 | -0.104 | 0.048 | -0.113 | -0.061 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.49 | 0.095 | 0.961 | 0.095 | 0.058 | 0.653 | 0.222 | 0.569 | 0.296 | 0.589 |
| | N | 139 | 142 | 139 | 142 | 139 | 143 | 139 | 142 | 88 | 81 |
| staffsize10 | Pearson Corr. | -0.031 | -0.132 | -0.098 | -.212* | 0.011 | -0.152 | -0.041 | -.182* | -0.063 | -0.014 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.722 | 0.123 | 0.259 | 0.012 | 0.904 | 0.074 | 0.634 | 0.033 | 0.566 | 0.906 |
| | N | 135 | 138 | 135 | 138 | 135 | 139 | 135 | 138 | 86 | 79 |
| website | Pearson Corr. | 0.063 | 0.041 | 0.095 | 0.039 | 0.132 | 0.104 | 0.015 | -0.021 | -0.095 | 0.045 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.464 | 0.628 | 0.267 | 0.645 | 0.121 | 0.215 | 0.863 | 0.808 | 0.381 | 0.688 |
| | N | 139 | 142 | 139 | 142 | 139 | 143 | 139 | 142 | 88 | 81 |

Correlations Continued

| | | EDbud1009 | EDterms0908 | parksbud1009 | parksterms0908 | PSbud0910 | PStersms0908 | PWbud1009 | PWterms0908 | totalbud1009 | totalterms0908 |
|-----------------------|-----------------|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|------------------|---------------------|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| EDterms0409 | Pearson Corr. | 0.051 | .482** | 0.053 | .339** | 0.052 | 0.059 | 0.051 | .232** | -0.056 | -0.026 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.549 | 0 | 0.536 | 0 | 0.542 | 0.492 | 0.554 | 0.006 | 0.517 | 0.765 |
| | N | 139 | 139 | 139 | 139 | 139 | 139 | 139 | 139 | 135 | 135 |
| EDbud0510 | Pearson Corr. | 0.017 | -0.03 | 0.017 | -0.079 | 0.017 | -0.109 | 0.018 | -0.054 | -0.016 | -0.038 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.842 | 0.725 | 0.845 | 0.354 | 0.841 | 0.202 | 0.831 | 0.53 | 0.85 | 0.658 |
| | N | 142 | 140 | 142 | 140 | 142 | 140 | 142 | 140 | 138 | 138 |
| PRTterms0409 | Pearson Corr. | 0.076 | .300** | 0.08 | .482** | 0.079 | 0.101 | 0.078 | .233** | -0.088 | 0.027 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.375 | 0 | 0.347 | 0 | 0.354 | 0.238 | 0.358 | 0.006 | 0.311 | 0.758 |
| | N | 139 | 139 | 139 | 139 | 139 | 139 | 139 | 139 | 135 | 135 |
| PRTbud0510 | Pearson Corr. | 0.038 | -0.041 | 0.039 | -0.006 | 0.04 | -0.123 | 0.041 | -0.083 | -0.039 | -0.015 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.653 | 0.632 | 0.641 | 0.939 | 0.638 | 0.149 | 0.627 | 0.328 | 0.65 | 0.862 |
| | N | 142 | 140 | 142 | 140 | 142 | 140 | 142 | 140 | 138 | 138 |
| PStersms0409 | Pearson Corr. | -0.049 | 0.08 | -0.045 | .232** | -0.047 | .457** | -0.046 | .253** | 0.047 | 0.007 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.564 | 0.35 | 0.597 | 0.006 | 0.586 | 0 | 0.59 | 0.003 | 0.591 | 0.937 |
| | N | 139 | 139 | 139 | 139 | 139 | 139 | 139 | 139 | 135 | 135 |
| PSbud0510 | Pearson Corr. | 0.055 | -0.161 | 0.056 | -.194* | 0.058 | -.204* | 0.06 | -.298** | -0.055 | -0.066 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.511 | 0.057 | 0.504 | 0.022 | 0.493 | 0.015 | 0.474 | 0 | 0.521 | 0.437 |
| | N | 143 | 141 | 143 | 141 | 143 | 141 | 143 | 141 | 139 | 139 |
| PWterms0409 | Pearson Corr. | 0.074 | .388** | 0.077 | .435** | 0.076 | .259** | 0.074 | .491** | -0.09 | 0.01 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.386 | 0 | 0.367 | 0 | 0.377 | 0.002 | 0.385 | 0 | 0.301 | 0.904 |
| | N | 139 | 139 | 139 | 139 | 139 | 139 | 139 | 139 | 135 | 135 |
| PWbud0510 | Pearson Corr. | 0.047 | -0.109 | 0.045 | -0.13 | 0.046 | -.180* | 0.051 | -.233** | -0.044 | -0.094 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.581 | 0.2 | 0.592 | 0.125 | 0.586 | 0.034 | 0.548 | 0.006 | 0.609 | 0.275 |
| | N | 142 | 140 | 142 | 140 | 142 | 140 | 142 | 140 | 138 | 138 |
| totalbud0510 | Pearson Corr. | -0.024 | -0.19 | -0.027 | -.327** | -0.027 | -0.003 | -0.024 | -.341** | 0.028 | -0.009 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.823 | 0.08 | 0.801 | 0.002 | 0.806 | 0.978 | 0.826 | 0.001 | 0.793 | 0.935 |
| | N | 88 | 86 | 88 | 86 | 88 | 86 | 88 | 86 | 88 | 86 |
| totalterms0409 | Pearson Corr. | 0.045 | -0.102 | 0.045 | -0.013 | 0.044 | -0.03 | 0.044 | 0.046 | -0.047 | 0.059 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.689 | 0.37 | 0.692 | 0.907 | 0.697 | 0.793 | 0.698 | 0.683 | 0.679 | 0.603 |
| | N | 81 | 80 | 81 | 80 | 81 | 80 | 81 | 80 | 79 | 81 |

Correlations Continued

| | | EDbud1009 | EDterms0908 | parksbud1009 | parksterms0908 | PSbud0910 | PStersms0908 | PWbud1009 | PWterms0908 | totalbud1009 | totalterms0908 |
|-----------------------|-----------------|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|------------------|---------------------|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| EDbud1009 | Pearson Corr. | 1 | 0.01 | 1.000** | -0.009 | 1.000** | 0.044 | 1.000** | 0.004 | -1.000** | 0.024 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | 0.906 | 0 | 0.918 | 0 | 0.608 | 0 | 0.958 | 0 | 0.781 |
| | N | 143 | 141 | 143 | 141 | 143 | 141 | 143 | 141 | 139 | 139 |
| EDterms0908 | Pearson Corr. | 0.01 | 1 | 0.013 | .534** | 0.011 | 0.111 | 0.009 | .597** | -0.015 | -0.075 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.906 | | 0.882 | 0 | 0.893 | 0.19 | 0.913 | 0 | 0.864 | 0.381 |
| | N | 141 | 141 | 141 | 141 | 141 | 141 | 141 | 141 | 137 | 137 |
| parksbud1009 | Pearson Corr. | 1.000** | 0.013 | 1 | -0.003 | 1.000** | 0.045 | 1.000** | 0.007 | -1.000** | 0.024 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0 | 0.882 | | 0.971 | 0 | 0.593 | 0 | 0.93 | 0 | 0.777 |
| | N | 143 | 141 | 143 | 141 | 143 | 141 | 143 | 141 | 139 | 139 |
| parksterms0908 | Pearson Corr. | -0.009 | .534** | -0.003 | 1 | -0.005 | .366** | -0.008 | .605** | 0.002 | .243** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.918 | 0 | 0.971 | | 0.956 | 0 | 0.924 | 0 | 0.986 | 0.004 |
| | N | 141 | 141 | 141 | 141 | 141 | 141 | 141 | 141 | 137 | 137 |
| PSbud0910 | Pearson Corr. | 1.000** | 0.011 | 1.000** | -0.005 | 1 | 0.044 | 1.000** | 0.006 | -1.000** | 0.024 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0 | 0.893 | 0 | 0.956 | | 0.608 | 0 | 0.947 | 0 | 0.779 |
| | N | 143 | 141 | 143 | 141 | 143 | 141 | 143 | 141 | 139 | 139 |
| PStersms0908 | Pearson Corr. | 0.044 | 0.111 | 0.045 | .366** | 0.044 | 1 | 0.043 | .332** | -0.053 | .306** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.608 | 0.19 | 0.593 | 0 | 0.608 | | 0.613 | 0 | 0.538 | 0 |
| | N | 141 | 141 | 141 | 141 | 141 | 141 | 141 | 141 | 137 | 137 |
| PWbud1009 | Pearson Corr. | 1.000** | 0.009 | 1.000** | -0.008 | 1.000** | 0.043 | 1 | 0.004 | -1.000** | 0.024 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0 | 0.913 | 0 | 0.924 | 0 | 0.613 | | 0.965 | 0 | 0.783 |
| | N | 143 | 141 | 143 | 141 | 143 | 141 | 143 | 141 | 139 | 139 |
| PWterms0908 | Pearson Corr. | 0.004 | .597** | 0.007 | .605** | 0.006 | .332** | 0.004 | 1 | -0.012 | 0.007 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.958 | 0 | 0.93 | 0 | 0.947 | 0 | 0.965 | | 0.892 | 0.937 |
| | N | 141 | 141 | 141 | 141 | 141 | 141 | 141 | 141 | 137 | 137 |
| totalbud1009 | Pearson Corr. | -1.000** | -0.015 | -1.000** | 0.002 | -1.000** | -0.053 | -1.000** | -0.012 | 1 | -0.025 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0 | 0.864 | 0 | 0.986 | 0 | 0.538 | 0 | 0.892 | | 0.776 |
| | N | 139 | 137 | 139 | 137 | 139 | 137 | 139 | 137 | 139 | 137 |
| totalterms0908 | Pearson Corr. | 0.024 | -0.075 | 0.024 | .243** | 0.024 | .306** | 0.024 | 0.007 | -0.025 | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.781 | 0.381 | 0.777 | 0.004 | 0.779 | 0 | 0.783 | 0.937 | 0.776 | |
| | N | 139 | 137 | 139 | 137 | 139 | 137 | 139 | 137 | 137 | 139 |

Correlations Continued

| | | EDbud1009 | EDterms0908 | parksbud1009 | parksterms0908 | PSbud0910 | PSters0908 | PWbud1009 | PWterms0908 | totalbud1009 | totalterms0908 |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| circ10 | Pearson Corr. | -0.067 | -0.054 | -0.069 | -0.035 | -0.068 | -0.064 | -0.068 | -0.093 | 0.069 | -0.111 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.432 | 0.524 | 0.414 | 0.682 | 0.421 | 0.449 | 0.422 | 0.276 | 0.419 | 0.196 |
| | N | 142 | 140 | 142 | 140 | 142 | 140 | 142 | 140 | 138 | 138 |
| locallyowned | Pearson Corr. | 0.056 | 0.002 | 0.056 | -0.055 | 0.056 | 0.031 | 0.058 | -0.072 | -0.056 | 0.01 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.507 | 0.979 | 0.506 | 0.515 | 0.507 | 0.718 | 0.494 | 0.396 | 0.514 | 0.907 |
| | N | 143 | 141 | 143 | 141 | 143 | 141 | 143 | 141 | 139 | 139 |
| marketsat10 | Pearson Corr. | 0.028 | 0.039 | 0.028 | 0.086 | 0.028 | -0.024 | 0.028 | 0.025 | -0.028 | -0.047 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.739 | 0.643 | 0.744 | 0.308 | 0.739 | 0.78 | 0.736 | 0.765 | 0.742 | 0.583 |
| | N | 143 | 141 | 143 | 141 | 143 | 141 | 143 | 141 | 139 | 139 |
| pop10 | Pearson Corr. | -0.05 | -0.044 | -0.051 | -0.039 | -0.051 | -0.052 | -0.051 | -0.03 | 0.051 | -0.071 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.554 | 0.602 | 0.545 | 0.642 | 0.546 | 0.537 | 0.543 | 0.72 | 0.551 | 0.408 |
| | N | 143 | 141 | 143 | 141 | 143 | 141 | 143 | 141 | 139 | 139 |
| region | Pearson Corr. | -0.021 | 0.051 | -0.021 | -0.013 | -0.021 | -0.162 | -0.021 | 0.041 | 0.022 | -0.006 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.8 | 0.55 | 0.801 | 0.874 | 0.808 | 0.055 | 0.803 | 0.628 | 0.795 | 0.946 |
| | N | 143 | 141 | 143 | 141 | 143 | 141 | 143 | 141 | 139 | 139 |
| staffsize10 | Pearson Corr. | -0.097 | 0.012 | -0.097 | -0.027 | -0.098 | 0.033 | -0.098 | 0.026 | 0.097 | -0.112 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.258 | 0.892 | 0.254 | 0.759 | 0.253 | 0.698 | 0.252 | 0.767 | 0.263 | 0.194 |
| | N | 139 | 137 | 139 | 137 | 139 | 137 | 139 | 137 | 135 | 135 |
| website | Pearson Corr. | -0.046 | 0.128 | -0.045 | 0.078 | -0.045 | -0.015 | -0.046 | 0.112 | 0.045 | 0.028 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.585 | 0.131 | 0.596 | 0.355 | 0.597 | 0.859 | 0.583 | 0.188 | 0.597 | 0.742 |
| | N | 143 | 141 | 143 | 141 | 143 | 141 | 143 | 141 | 139 | 139 |

Correlations Continued

| | | circ10 | locallyowned | marketsat10 | pop10 | region | staffsize10 | website |
|-----------------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------------|----------------|
| EDterms0409 | Pearson Corr. | -0.079 | .179* | 0.128 | -.191* | -0.059 | -0.031 | 0.063 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.359 | 0.035 | 0.134 | 0.024 | 0.49 | 0.722 | 0.464 |
| | N | 138 | 139 | 139 | 139 | 139 | 135 | 139 |
| EBbud0510 | Pearson Corr. | -0.013 | -0.033 | -0.064 | -0.017 | 0.141 | -0.132 | 0.041 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.876 | 0.694 | 0.45 | 0.837 | 0.095 | 0.123 | 0.628 |
| | N | 141 | 142 | 142 | 142 | 142 | 138 | 142 |
| PRTterms0409 | Pearson Corr. | -0.146 | 0.085 | 0.155 | -.223** | -0.004 | -0.098 | 0.095 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.088 | 0.322 | 0.069 | 0.008 | 0.961 | 0.259 | 0.267 |
| | N | 138 | 139 | 139 | 139 | 139 | 135 | 139 |
| PRTbud0510 | Pearson Corr. | -0.142 | 0.023 | 0.151 | -.238** | 0.141 | -.212* | 0.039 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.093 | 0.788 | 0.073 | 0.004 | 0.095 | 0.012 | 0.645 |
| | N | 141 | 142 | 142 | 142 | 142 | 138 | 142 |
| PStems0409 | Pearson Corr. | -0.103 | 0.012 | -0.048 | -0.049 | -0.161 | 0.011 | 0.132 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.229 | 0.89 | 0.574 | 0.567 | 0.058 | 0.904 | 0.121 |
| | N | 138 | 139 | 139 | 139 | 139 | 135 | 139 |
| PSbud0510 | Pearson Corr. | -0.072 | 0.068 | 0.022 | -0.119 | 0.038 | -0.152 | 0.104 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.396 | 0.42 | 0.798 | 0.156 | 0.653 | 0.074 | 0.215 |
| | N | 142 | 143 | 143 | 143 | 143 | 139 | 143 |
| PWterms0409 | Pearson Corr. | -0.12 | 0.078 | .167* | -.227** | -0.104 | -0.041 | 0.015 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.161 | 0.364 | 0.049 | 0.007 | 0.222 | 0.634 | 0.863 |
| | N | 138 | 139 | 139 | 139 | 139 | 135 | 139 |
| PWbud0510 | Pearson Corr. | -0.138 | 0.041 | 0.041 | -.194* | 0.048 | -.182* | -0.021 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.103 | 0.626 | 0.632 | 0.021 | 0.569 | 0.033 | 0.808 |
| | N | 141 | 142 | 142 | 142 | 142 | 138 | 142 |
| totalbud0510 | Pearson Corr. | -0.018 | 0.091 | -0.089 | 0.067 | -0.113 | -0.063 | -0.095 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.87 | 0.401 | 0.409 | 0.533 | 0.296 | 0.566 | 0.381 |
| | N | 87 | 88 | 88 | 88 | 88 | 86 | 88 |
| totalterms0409 | Pearson Corr. | -0.036 | -0.134 | -0.094 | 0.028 | -0.061 | -0.014 | 0.045 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.749 | 0.233 | 0.403 | 0.805 | 0.589 | 0.906 | 0.688 |
| | N | 80 | 81 | 81 | 81 | 81 | 79 | 81 |

Correlations Continued

| | | circ10 | locallyowned | marketsat10 | pop10 | region | staffsize10 | website |
|-----------------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------------|----------------|
| EDbud1009 | Pearson Corr. | -0.067 | 0.056 | 0.028 | -0.05 | -0.021 | -0.097 | -0.046 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.432 | 0.507 | 0.739 | 0.554 | 0.8 | 0.258 | 0.585 |
| | N | 142 | 143 | 143 | 143 | 143 | 139 | 143 |
| EDterms0908 | Pearson Corr. | -0.054 | 0.002 | 0.039 | -0.044 | 0.051 | 0.012 | 0.128 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.524 | 0.979 | 0.643 | 0.602 | 0.55 | 0.892 | 0.131 |
| | N | 140 | 141 | 141 | 141 | 141 | 137 | 141 |
| parksbud1009 | Pearson Corr. | -0.069 | 0.056 | 0.028 | -0.051 | -0.021 | -0.097 | -0.045 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.414 | 0.506 | 0.744 | 0.545 | 0.801 | 0.254 | 0.596 |
| | N | 142 | 143 | 143 | 143 | 143 | 139 | 143 |
| parksterms0908 | Pearson Corr. | -0.035 | -0.055 | 0.086 | -0.039 | -0.013 | -0.027 | 0.078 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.682 | 0.515 | 0.308 | 0.642 | 0.874 | 0.759 | 0.355 |
| | N | 140 | 141 | 141 | 141 | 141 | 137 | 141 |
| PSbud0910 | Pearson Corr. | -0.068 | 0.056 | 0.028 | -0.051 | -0.021 | -0.098 | -0.045 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.421 | 0.507 | 0.739 | 0.546 | 0.808 | 0.253 | 0.597 |
| | N | 142 | 143 | 143 | 143 | 143 | 139 | 143 |
| PStersms0908 | Pearson Corr. | -0.064 | 0.031 | -0.024 | -0.052 | -0.162 | 0.033 | -0.015 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.449 | 0.718 | 0.78 | 0.537 | 0.055 | 0.698 | 0.859 |
| | N | 140 | 141 | 141 | 141 | 141 | 137 | 141 |
| PWbud1009 | Pearson Corr. | -0.068 | 0.058 | 0.028 | -0.051 | -0.021 | -0.098 | -0.046 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.422 | 0.494 | 0.736 | 0.543 | 0.803 | 0.252 | 0.583 |
| | N | 142 | 143 | 143 | 143 | 143 | 139 | 143 |
| PWterms0908 | Pearson Corr. | -0.093 | -0.072 | 0.025 | -0.03 | 0.041 | 0.026 | 0.112 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.276 | 0.396 | 0.765 | 0.72 | 0.628 | 0.767 | 0.188 |
| | N | 140 | 141 | 141 | 141 | 141 | 137 | 141 |
| totalbud1009 | Pearson Corr. | 0.069 | -0.056 | -0.028 | 0.051 | 0.022 | 0.097 | 0.045 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.419 | 0.514 | 0.742 | 0.551 | 0.795 | 0.263 | 0.597 |
| | N | 138 | 139 | 139 | 139 | 139 | 135 | 139 |
| totalterms0908 | Pearson Corr. | -0.111 | 0.01 | -0.047 | -0.071 | -0.006 | -0.112 | 0.028 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.196 | 0.907 | 0.583 | 0.408 | 0.946 | 0.194 | 0.742 |
| | N | 138 | 139 | 139 | 139 | 139 | 135 | 139 |

Correlations Continued

| | | circ10 | locallyowned | marketsat10 | pop10 | region | staffsize10 | website |
|---------------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------------|----------------|
| circ10 | Pearson Corr. | 1 | .185* | .297** | .666** | -.172* | .699** | 0.002 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | 0.027 | 0 | 0 | 0.04 | 0 | 0.986 |
| | N | 142 | 142 | 142 | 142 | 142 | 139 | 142 |
| locallyowned | Pearson Corr. | .185* | 1 | 0.084 | 0.147 | -.175* | .279** | -0.071 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.027 | | 0.321 | 0.08 | 0.036 | 0.001 | 0.4 |
| | N | 142 | 143 | 143 | 143 | 143 | 139 | 143 |
| marketsat10 | Pearson Corr. | .297** | 0.084 | 1 | -.316** | -.251** | 0.098 | -0.017 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0 | 0.321 | | 0 | 0.002 | 0.249 | 0.844 |
| | N | 142 | 143 | 143 | 143 | 143 | 139 | 143 |
| pop10 | Pearson Corr. | .666** | 0.147 | -.316** | 1 | 0.091 | .476** | 0.071 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0 | 0.08 | 0 | | 0.282 | 0 | 0.401 |
| | N | 142 | 143 | 143 | 143 | 143 | 139 | 143 |
| region | Pearson Corr. | -.172* | -.175* | -.251** | 0.091 | 1 | -.227** | 0.052 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.04 | 0.036 | 0.002 | 0.282 | | 0.007 | 0.536 |
| | N | 142 | 143 | 143 | 143 | 143 | 139 | 143 |
| staffsize10 | Pearson Corr. | .699** | .279** | 0.098 | .476** | -.227** | 1 | -0.057 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0 | 0.001 | 0.249 | 0 | 0.007 | | 0.506 |
| | N | 139 | 139 | 139 | 139 | 139 | 139 | 139 |
| website | Pearson Corr. | 0.002 | -0.071 | -0.017 | 0.071 | 0.052 | -0.057 | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.986 | 0.4 | 0.844 | 0.401 | 0.536 | 0.506 | |
| | N | 142 | 143 | 143 | 143 | 143 | 139 | 143 |