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The effects of different competitive situations on the political content of daily newspapers

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The Effects of Different Competitive Situations On the Political Content of Daily Newspapers

by

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B.A. Wilfrid Laurier University, 1980

Thesis

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Abstract

The value of the daily newspaper to the individuals who read it is at the core of this study. Some have felt that the newspaper has been affected for the worse by a loss in competition in many communities. Their worries often centre on the effects that the loss could have on the role of a newspaper and on its responsibilities to the public. The previous research on this topic has failed to turn up evidence of a substantial difference between monopoly and competitive newspapers. Canadian works on this subject were scant and, in light of the report of the Royal Commission on Newspapers (mainly inconclusive on this topic), this study attempted to look at the question of the effects of different competitive situations on the political content of the daily newspaper. The study limited itself to the examination of political news stories because it was felt that in this area, differences that would occur would have a greater impact on the lives of the readers than differences in the non-political section.

The Canadian newspaper situation presented the opportunity to study two newspapers which had recently experienced opposite changes in the degree of competitiveness of the market they were in. The Edmonton

Journal faced an increase in competition and the Ottawa Citizen was left in a monopoly situation. The study examined both newspapers in monopoly and competitive times. This, it was hoped, would allow the study to make conclusions about the effects of different competitive situations on the political content of the newspaper.

The political content was broken down into three areas, political news stories, editorials and political comment and letters to the editor. These areas were examined using both qualitiative and quantitative content analysis. Measures were created and tested to allow for the study of the effects of different competitive situations.

The thesis adopted here was that no differences would be found in either newspaper that was statistically significant or consistent across the two competitive times. The results bear this out. In none of the categories were results achieved that discounted the thesis. A few isolated differences were reported, but often they were not statistically significant and they were rarely similar across the two newspapers. Thus, practically the monopoly newspaper does not appear to be a worse newspaper than the competive newspaper. The study concludes that currently, the competitive status of a newspaper is not a major factor affecting the political content of the newspaper.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter I Introduction

One of the great fears in liberal democracies such as Canada or the United States is the loss of competition. For some, the loss of competition, reflected in a decreasing variety of choices in the market place means simply that the fittest have survived. For others, however, the loss of competition symbolizes a loss of freedom of economic choice which is thought to be a cornerstone of liberal democracy. These concerns become acute when they are dealing with the mass media of communication. Ben Bagdikian explains why the loss of choice in the mass media is more of a concern to people than the loss of choice in other businesses:

> between crises we accumulate unspectacular information and ideas that shape our values and those values in turn influence how we meet crises when they arise. In this everyday unspectacular laying down of the national consciousness I think the evidence is clear that our media do have a subtle but profound effect.(1)

The information the media provide shapes our ideals, beliefs and view of the world at large. When a choice is no longer available to the public in the way that society gets most of its information, alarm is raised in many corners of the

Table I

Competition in Daily Newspapers

Year	Papers	United States Cities	Competitive Papers	Competitive Cities
1960	1752	1498	464	219
1972	1708	1511	377	181
1981	1627	1480	339	162
		Canada		
1960	93	79	28	14*
1972	113	95	32	14
1981	114	95	33	14

Year	Competitive Papers(%)	Competitive Cities(%)
	United States	
1960	26.48	14.61
1972	22.07	11.98
1981	20.08	10.95
	Canada	
1960	30.11	17.72
1972	28.32	12.39
1981	28.95	12.28

*Note; In Canada, the figures regarding competition show that the same number of cities have competition in spite of greater number of competitive papers. This suggests that the two paper cities became three or four paper cities, not that competition increased across Canada.

Source: Ayer Directory of Publications, Ayer Press.

society. The concern seems to be centred mainly on the newspaper industry as the number of cities in the United States and Canada where newspaper competition is decreasing at a rapid rate. Table I reveals the figures indicating the decreasing competition in both Canada and the United States in the last 23 years.

Often it is assumed that monopoly situations are "evil" and that only competition serves the public interest. One wonders if monopolies are perceived as "evil" because they have a potential unchecked power base, or because the lack of competition has a measurable effect on how the newspaper performs its duties. The question to be studied here is not the inherent value of competition for newspapers, but how the role of a newspaper is affected by competitive status. In other words, does a newspaper in a competitive situation differ significantly in the essential functions of a newspaper from a monopoly newspaper?

In attempting to study this question, one must first consider the role of a newspaper. The governments of Western democracies seem to feel that the media, and the newspaper industry in specific, have a responsibility to the people. The governments have attempted to study the functionings of their media to ensure that they do carry out their duties in spite of competitive status and other changes. The highlights some of the studies are presented

below. Individuals have addressed the question of the roles and responsibilities of the press and portions of their work are examined in this study. The next part of the question concerns the effects of different competitive situations on that role. Again, studies are consulted here to ascertain some of the effects of different competitive situations on the role of the press. A study of specific research pieces on competition in the newspaper industry yields a number of hypotheses worthy of study. Before the hypotheses can be set out, however, the concepts of the role and the responsibilities of the press and the manner in which to study them, need be outlined.

The role of the press is, in brief, to provide people with information relevant to their particular interests (as consumers, parents, workers, citizens and so forth). It is the political content of the newspaper which is relevant to the individual citizen and thus is the subject for the comparisons to be made over different competitive situations. The rationale for the study of political news is expanded upon below. Briefly, the political content of the newspaper is deemed to be the most important factor in determining the role of the press. As well, political news appears to be important because of the relevance of this information for the public.

Two cities in Canada offer competitive situations of interest for this particular study. The Edmonton Journal was in a monopoly situation until the Edmonton Sun commenced publishing in 1978. The situation in Ottawa was reversed. The Ottawa Citizen had competition from the Ottawa Journal until the latter's demise in 1980. Thus two papers, the Edmonton Journal and the Ottawa Citizen, have both experienced change in competitive status in recent years. A study of these two papers should help to determine some of the effects of competitive status and thus provide information regarding the value of competition for newspaper content. Through studying one paper in both competitive situations in both cities, the opportunity presents itself to comment on the differences due to different competitive situations and to comment on the effects of both a loss and a gain in competition on the political content of a daily newspaper.

Earlier works studied lead one to believe that competition has no consistent universally significant effects upon a newspaper's content.(2) In other words, all papers tend to react individually to competition and follow no set pattern. This then will be the expected result from the study here: that different competitive situations will have no universal, consistent significant effects on the political content of a daily newspaper.

The rest of this chapter considers the government responses to diminishing competition and the role and responsibilities of the press in Canada. In addition, the possible effects of different competitive situations on that role are discussed.

Government Responses

Concerns over the loss of competition have spawned extensive studies on the question of competition in the media in Canada, the United States and Great Britain. The governments in Western liberal democracies have watched the newspaper industry, and the media in general, change rapidly over the past few years. Aware and concerned over many of the ownership and competitive status changes, they felt it was their role as protector of individual rights to examine further these phenonema. Under the ideological auspices of the social responsibility theorists (discussed later in the chapter), the government felt that they were the public agency necessary to determine if the press were maintaining their social responsibility throughout the changes in competitive status and increase in chain ownership.

The British have had two Royal Commissions on the Press, one in 1962 and one in 1977. As well, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission of 1970(3) examined the issue of the lack of competition in the media. All studies

concluded that the press is not like other businesses and hence cannot be controlled as other businesses are. The British government, as a result of these reports, formed the British Press Council to monitor the activities of the press.

The Americans have also examined the press. The Federal Trade Commission's Bureau of Competition looked at the key issue of Media Concentration in 1978.(4) Their findings were mainly the result of the opinions of the media and economic experts called in to testify. Although largely unsubstantiated with regards to the effects under study here, the Symposium's report does deal in more detail and more specifically with the economics of chain ownership and competition. The role and responsibilities of the press received superficial treatment. The report's conclusions deal more with the large American chains than with the effects of a change in competitive status.

Canadian concerns towards chain ownership are perhaps more immediate than the American. With only two major chains in Canada, the threat of abuse of power seems more real than in the United States, where there are a variety of chains involved in newspaper ownership. The greater fear in Canada of chain ownership and monopoly press situations is shown in the high profile received by the two government oriented studies of the press and the mass media.

The first study, ordered by the Senate in 1969, and chaired by Senator Keith Davey, set out to "examine ownership and control patterns as well as the impact of the mass media on the Canadian public."(5) The Special Senate Committee on the Mass Media made two major recommendations regarding the press. The first involved the quantity of newspapers and the other involved the quality of the press. The first recommendation suggested setting up a Press Ownership Review Board to study all transactions increasing concentration of ownership, with the burden on those desiring the transaction to prove that it is in the public's best interest to do so.(6) The report also advocated that press councils be set up nationaly, provincially and locally to act as ombudsmen between newspapers, chains and the public.(7) These recommendations, while receiving much attention at the time of publication, have remained largely ignored by all but a few academics. But Senator Davey sees the role of his committee as beyond that of merely making recommendations. He claims his work "has provided the people of Canada with one considered assessment of their (media) performance, one set of insights into their activities."(8) The interest sparked by the Senate Committee has forced the media to realize that they are being watched and Davey feels that this helps to keep the quality of the press high. In general however, the Davey report was neither implemented nor heeded.

The major restructuring of the Canadian press that took place on August 27, 1980, sparked a national debate and public demands that something be done. The immediate situation involved a complex set of deals involving the two largest chains in Canada, Thomson and Southam. The deals culminated in the closing of two newspapers, one in Ottawa and one in Winnipeg, leaving each chain in a monopoly in one of the two cities. The dealings also involved Thomson withdrawing from deals in Montreal and Vancouver, leaving Southam with a monopoly. Thomson also merged the two newspapers in Victoria and sold his Calgary paper to the only other city paper. Collusion and charges of conspiracy to restrict market competition caused the federal government to act - the Royal Commission on Newspapers was established to "inquire into the causes and consequences of an increase in the concentration of press ownership and control."(9)

The Commission's report was finished in the specified one year, unusual for a Royal Commission. This suggested the importance of the matter to the Commission as well as the government. The Commission's report made many recommendations, which they included in one piece of legislation they entitled the Canadian Newspaper Act.

Specifically, they felt the legislation would:

1. Prohibit significant further concentration of ownership and control of daily newspapers and of common ownership of these newspapers and other media;
2. Correct the very worst cases of concentration that now exist;
3. Provide incentives to widen ownership and create new newspapers;
4. Protect journalists' rights and freedom to comment on any topic (regardless of ownership interest);
5. Establish a Press Rights Panel to monitor the Canadian Newspaper Act;
6. Give tax incentives to encourage papers to print more information;
7. Provide matching funds to improve wire services in Canada and abroad.(10)

Although the report gathered much attention when it first appeared in August 1981, it has gradually lost the interest of most of the public. Kent's report has been criticized by some for its methods. Lord McGregor, chairman of the 1977 British Royal Commission on Newspapers, said, he "found it difficult to believe that evidence could be collected in 10 months to support the Commission's recommendations, when it took his group three years to assemble the material."(11)

The Canadian government has attempted to investigate the question of monopoly press, yet very little has been accomplished as a result of Kent's or Davey's suggestions. The value of the two commissions as consciousness raisers is limited to the period immediately following their publication.

The reason why little has been enacted as a result of these Royal Commissions is not of real consequence to this paper, but deserves fleeting attention. The first reason lies in the view of interference in the press. Carman Cumming suggests that it is "because of a special taboo, nurtered by the press, dictating that anyone who suggests a solution to the concentration problem must be an enemy of the press."(12) This taboo suggests that those who want to put any sort of restriction on the ownership of the press are against the ideals of free speech and freedom of the press. As well, those who examine the communist press, which is controlled by the government are wary of that same situation occuring here through increased government regulation of the press. The controlled press of the communist countries has a limited and government approved content. This is anathema to the freedom democracies revere.

The governments have attempted to discuss the problems they feel lie in monopolies and chain ownership. The lack of concrete solutions is perhaps a function of the fear of the consequences of interfering in the press. It could also be that the monopoly press under study here, is, in effect, not a problem in terms of the quality of the product or in its ability to function as a result of its monopoly status.

The Role and Responsibility of the Press in Canada

This section of the introduction considers how spokesmen for both monopoly and competitive press perceive that their competitive situation is optimal for carrying out the functions of the press. Totalitarian and authoritarian states tend to view the press as an arm of government whose sole purpose is to reinforce a complete or total identity of interests among the authorities, the nation and the citizens.(13) The liberal democratic view of the press resembles that suggested by Fred Siebert as the social responsibility theory of the press. This theory asserts that unrestricted freedom of the market place must be tempered with a concern for truth and fair play.(14) In Canada the Royal Comission on Newspapers, chaired by Tom Kent, saw the social responsibility of the press attained

> ...not only by treating events and persons with fairness and impartiality, but also by considering the welfare of the community and of humanity in general in a spirit devoid of cynicism. This assigns to the press a Platonic ideal, rarely attained, but ever a goal in editors, staff and readers alike.(15)

Elsewhere, the Kent Report stated that "without social responsibilities, the press would be but a business like others and the market its only law."(16) In Canada, as with other liberal democracies, the press is neither wholly a business nor a public good, but a combination of the two,

requiring attention different from that of other enterprises.

In Canada, the government's concern over the social responsibility of the press is evidenced by their desire to investigate the factors that could affect that responsibility. The Canadian government established the Davey Commission on the Mass Media and the Kent Commission on Newspapers and some of the concerns raised in both deal with matters under investigation here. The studies examined and reported on some of the factors affecting the press and the press's ability to be socially responsible. In general, the Royal Commission (Kent Commission) and the Select Senate Committee (Davey Commission) view the press as following a social conscience. Davey and Kent also feel that chains and monopolies inhibit this conscience. The reports, however, are sketchy when the proof to support these statements are needed.

In addition to concerns of the Canadian government over the social responsibility of the press, the Canadian Daily Newspaper Publisher's Association set out a statement of principles dealing with the concept of social responsibility. This suggests that the press does view itself as possessing a social responsibility. The statement of principles attempts to impose the values of integrity, honesty and social responsibility on its member newspapers,

regardless of factors such as competitive status. (The complete statement of principles is presented in Appendix I.)

Other countries with a similar view of the press have taken an interest in the forces affecting the social responsibility of the press. In Britain a Press Council was established to determine if the media fulfilled their duty of providing complete and honest information.(17) As well, concern over the role and responsibilities of the press has been voiced in the United States. The American Commission on the Freedom of the Press, chaired by Robert Hutchins, and the Federal Trade Commission's Symposium on Media Concentration each examined the question of the social responsibility of the press. Both voiced concerns over decreasing competition and its effects on a newspaper, although neither was too specific in detailing the effects.(18)

The responsibilities of the press appear to include service and obligation to the community it serves. The press does indeed appear to have an assumed social responsibility for truth and fairness to the public. But in addition to the special responsibilities of the press, it does have certain functions to perform. It would seem on the surface that the function of a newspaper is to inform the public. How and what the media chooses to disclose

falls under the heading of the social responsibility of the press to be accurate and considerate of the consequences of their actions. The Commission on the Freedom of the Press, in the United States, stated that "the prime function of a newspaper is to satisfy the public's need to know, that is, to provide a truthful, comprehensive and intelligent account of the day's events in a context which gives them meaning."(19) The role as information provider ties in with the responsibility to print that information in a fair manner. But the Commission on Freedom of the Press cites four other functions of the press: to provide a forum for the exchange of comment and criticism; to provide a means of projecting the opinions and attitudes of the groups in the society to one another; to provide a method of presenting and clarifying the goals and values of the society; to provide a way of reaching every member of society by the currents of information, thought and feeling which the press supplies.(20)

Thus, the press seems to be more complex in purpose than simply a provider of information. The press is often viewed as a watchdog on community politicians, as an opinion leader, and as a locale for public feedback on issues concerning the general public. Hal Davis and Galen Rarick describe this editorial role as "a catharis of sorts, providing a place for the irate, the antagonist, the

displeased to speak out and be heard."(21) The role as an outlet for public debate is perhaps one of the most important; often the local paper is the only wide-reaching forum for discussion of many local issues, most notably in small communities with no other form of mass media locally produced. The Kent Report is emphatic on this editorial role: "...newspapers often provide the only vehicle for alternative or critical perspectives on the policies of a dominant faction. Their (the local press) role as opinion leaders in the community is critical and irreplaceable."(22) The newspaper then also functions as a forum for public debate on all issues. Cleo Mowers, formerly publisher of the Calgary Herald summarized these views about the roles and responsibilities of the press:

> The daily press, in this increasingly complex society, is the chief instrument for informing the people of the happenings, currents, changes and opportunities which they must understand for effective self-government and for preserving their society and civilization... Newspaper publishing is therefore a solemn, serious and essentially public responsibility.(23)

Those who fear monopoly press claim that monopolies inhibit this social responsibility from being executed to the fullest. Proponents of monopoly press find that the monopoly press is in no way inferior to a competitive paper in carrying out its social responsibilities. In fact,

they claim that competition inhibits the execution of the duties of social responsibility.

For the procompetitive side, Ben Bagdikian claims that the only safe source of information is one in which many voices can be heard.(24) This attitude that only in a competitive setting will the value of accuracy be acknowledged, and the social responsibility for accuracy be fulfilled, is fairly widespread although largely unsubstantiated. Stanley Bigman concluded that the best reason for the existence of a second newspaper in one community was "the feeling of security they gave the readers; the latter would have more confidence that no news was being supressed or distorted to benefit one of the publishers or one of his friends."(25) I. Norman Smith feels that freedom of the press is best attained when the reader has some freedom of choice as to the paper he reads, "whether his choice as to the paper he reads be based on its politics, sports, lightly dressed ladies or because its ink doesn't come off on the bedspread."(26) Cox and Morgan look at the situation in Merseyside, England, and find that competition allows the public to see "rivalry in what is presented (which) might at least ensure a measure of illumination and enhance democratic debate."(27) Peter C. Newman, editor of Maclean's, a weekly Canadian magazine, feels that democracy's best defense is achieved by owners

who thrive on competition.(28) Thus far, the proponents of competition have found only ideological reasons and selective anecdotal data for supporting competitive papers.

The Kent Commission funded several studies which it hoped would provide them with reliable data to test systematically how the lack of competition affected a newspaper. The Commission's conclusions state that lack of competition is not good, but the research presented throughout the paper indicates that the matter is far from resolved.(29)

Fred Fletcher's study of the public affairs coverage by the press, one of the Commission's research papers, looked at monopoly effects. He noted that competitive situations promoted investigative journalism and provided an incentive to resist pressures to supress news.(30) The reduction in competition can reduce the priority given to political coverage, as political news is no longer deemed necessary to attract readers from a competitor. A loss in competition often results in complacency and the lack of need to go out and produce a better product. A final and perhaps less controllable effect of declining competition noted by Fletcher was that journalists, seeing the job market shrink with each newspaper closing, tend to write to keep their jobs, rather than risk offending their bosses or the community they are covering.(31) Fletchers's work points

out many of the practical concerns over the loss of competitive newspapers. Other factors related to a lack of competition include the loss of the need to be sensitive to local issues as the monopoly situation of the paper ensures a constant readership.(32) Kent suggested that a paper must be very bad before a large number of readers take the only alternative available and abandon the local newspaper.(33)

At the same time, benefits associated with monopolies may not materialize. Although advertisers only have to advertize in one newspaper, critics claim that newspapers in monopoly situations charged 50% higher than the price charged in competitive situations.(34) Kerton found that monopolies did not result in a less expensive product. He claimed that there is "an unexplained motivational effect which allows costs to float upward when competitive incentives are weakened."(35) As well, anti-monopolists fear that the economic concern for profit will cause quality to decrease as there is no need to compete in making a product of better value than another. Kent cites three Canadian examples of the importance of the dollars over content for Canadian publishers. Fisher, of Southam, claims that "survival is the first prerequisite", Lord Thomson says that in order to survive, "you must make a profit", and Paul Desmarais of Le Journal claims that if "your paper doesn't make money, it can't survive."(36) Thus the economics of

publishing suggest that perhaps monopoly press could become less content-oriented and more profit-oriented than a newspaper in a battle for an audience.

The social responsibility theorists tend to be wary of monopoly press:

> ...the power and near monopoly position of the media impose on them an obligation to be socially responsible to see that all sides are fairly presented and that the public has enough information to decide; and that if the media do not take on themselves such resonsibility it may be necessary for some other agency of the public to enforce it.(37)

These theorists view the current situation as beginning to approximate the 'authoritarian' view of the press, where it is controlled by an elite.(38) The potential for abuse in monopoly situations exists, and Badgikian claims that "we are being careless with history unless we assume that whoever has power, sooner or later will use it to the fullest."(39) These last two comments focus on the debate surrounding social responsibility. The monopoly publisher and owner has the power to fulfill the social responsibility of the press, but those in a monopoly situation also have the potential power to sue the press for political and economic gain. These concerns over the publishers' and owners' role have yet to be fully reported on, but are still an area of concern.

The owners of monopoly press refute many of the pro-competition arguments. Seiden attempts to reject the belief that stories are chosen on the basis of an editor's, or a publisher's bias. He claims that the choice of political content is a result of time available and volume of news rather than a conscious decision to control what is printed.(40) Others express similar protests to the anti-monopoly side. Hirsch and Gordon feel that "when a small number of firms compete, there is a tendency for all of them to aim at the centre and for their products to be different only in the incidentals."(41) Thus competition provides no alternatives. In fact, Bigman called the competing papers he studied "Rivals in Conformity." Ben Compaine cites four reasons why there should be no difference between competitive and monopoly press: There are the same constraints on monopoly and competitive papers of having to sell to a mass market; the editors share a common background and training base; the media are wary of accusations of monopoly power and would not abuse their monopoly; and the papers, regardless of their competitive status, have to meet standards to keep readers and advertising.(42) In addition, many feel that the other media provide competition to the newspaper, although this area has not yet been fully investigated. In Canada, particularly in Ontario, local dailies receive other newspaper competition

from the Globe and Mail, a quasi-national paper. However, it lacks the local news coverage that attracts readers to their community dailies. Also, some communities, notably Montreal, are served by both English and French language dailies, though the market tends to be differentiated on language lines.

Those who are less critical of monopoly press respond to the criticism that monopolies are insenstitive to local issues by claiming that monopoly papers feel a responsibility to present all sides and, as the only voice in the community, they tend to employ "consensus journalism"(43) to avoid alienating a large majority of the public.

Having refuted many of the criticisms suggested by those who are wary of monopoly press, those less fearful of monopoly press point out the benefits of monopolies over competitive status newspapers. They see competition as a situation which encourages the owners to stray from the role of provider of information to deal with the competition's "games" for increasing circulation. "Journalistic competition," says Fletcher, "often resulted in pressures to dramatize, simplify or trivialize the news in a quest to increase circulation."(44) In a monopoly situation, Stanley Bigman claims, this would not occur: A publisher alone in a market can "better resist the blandishments or even

threats of advertisers and pressure groups, can afford the best reporters, columnists and features, can speak out fearlessly in its editorials."(45) Avoiding local pressure groups is one way to ensure that no one group is able to monopolize the perspective presented. This is in direct conflict with the view of the competitive papers, who see the lack of competition as allowing one group to monopolize the local scene.

The debate surrounding which is better is not over by a mere discussion of the merits and pitfalls of both sides. Those in favour of competition seem to assume that alternative sources of information are different sources. Fascist Rome, with eight fascist papers, all of one ideological perspective seems evidence enough that more voices does not necessarily mean different voices.(46) In the 1976 Vancouver aldermanic race, the two dailies agreed almost entirely in their identification of serious candidates, making it clear that the existence of competing newspapers does not guarantee alternative perspectives.(47)

Thus, the question of the value of competition is not yet settled. Ideologically, it seems, more newspapers provide the diversity that Sandman feels is the keystone to democracy.(48) It is true however that cases do occur where the reason for two papers had become obscured over the years, as happened in Red Wing, Minnesota, where the two papers eventually merged.(49)

The fears about monopolies are often translated into the belief that the monopoly paper is not as 'good' as the competitive paper. The results of the study here will show both newspapers - the Edmonton Journal and the Ottawa Citizen - to be mainly unchanged in their political and editorial makeup over different competitive situations. Discussions with an Ottawa resident who had read the Citizen consistently in both competitive situations, revealed that he felt the paper had deteriorated with the demise of the Ottawa Journal. His comments were based on the appearance of such features as the new lifestyles section and increased coverage of non-political items. Most of his comments dealt with items not studied here. The concern of this study is in determining the effects of different competitive situations on the roles and responsibilities of the press with regards to political news. The changes which the Ottawa reader noted were cosmetic and not substantive, but his view is not uncommon. The second paper in a community contributes a feeling that nothing is being overlooked to favour a publisher or owner. The belief that only through competition will the paper produce a higher calibre product is common. But often the presence of competition is an assumed good. Schweitzer and Goldman make this point clear.(50) Competition is often assumed to be a valued commodity, yet for newspapers, the second paper is not

always necessary to ensure that the level of service will remain high.

It appears from the works cited thus far that monopoly and competitive papers have presented strong arguments supporting their respective situations. To determine if the claims made regarding the quality of the newspapers in each competitive situation are true, one must delve further into studies conducted to discover just what effects competition has on the quality of a newspaper. Chapter II explores the literature on the effects of competition on political content. The earlier section examines the general approaches, conclusions and hypotheses suggested by these works. The latter part of the chapter deals with the hypotheses and methods to be adopted in this study. As well, the data base is presented here and the measures explained and tested. Chapter III deals with the data, providing further detail on the method while outlining the results. Chapter IV suggests possible conclusions and also raises several factors to take in to consideration for future studies.

Endnotes

1. United States, Federal Trade Commission, Bureau of Competition, Proceedings of the Symposium on Media Concentration, Volume I, 14-15 December 1981, p. 9 (hereafter referred to as the Symposium on Media Concentration).

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Chapter II Literature Review, Methodology and Data Base

Literature Review

To bring the issue of the value of competition into focus for this particular study, it is necessary to examine relevant previous research in greater detail. Little work has been done in the field of competition either in Canada or elsewhere. A chronological examination of the major works reflects a developing methodology and a progression in thought. Originally, one newspaper was studied. However, over time, the studies looked at more newspapers and attempted to compare them. The studies then went back to the study of one newspaper but different approaches were used and different hypotheses investigated.

In 1948, Stanley Bigman published a paper entitled "Rivals in Conformity," in which he examined the community of Pottsville, Pennsylvania, which had two competing papers, the Republican and the Journal. He examined issues of both papers over a six-week period, paying special attention to editorials and controversial topics (politics, labour, business and industry, and minority groups). He

also used a one-week quantitative study of the papers and interviewed eleven leading Pottsville citizens. However, the differences between the papers, he stated, "were trivial."(1) In this respect, he concluded that his findings "are monotonous in their sameness."(2) He discovered that that there seemed to be more of a working agreement to ensure the papers' mutual survival than a competition.(3) He noted that instead of ideological competition between two papers, the newspapers tended to compete for circulation using prize give-aways. The best reason he could see for a competing press "was the feeling of security they gave the readers."(4) This reason, according to Bigman, has no substantive rationale but is merely a window dressing panacea for an uneasy public.

In 1955, Wesley F. Willoughby examined two competing dailies (the Herald and the Democrat) in Washington, Indiana. The study was partially qualitative, partially quantitative and also included interviews with the publishers of the two papers. He examined four editions of each paper in their entirety, and examined special topics (for example, editorials) for a three-week period. He found that there

> was negligible competition of ideas, and there were few opposing viewpoints.... The Washington dailies not only resemble each other in makeup, typography and size, but also are very much alike in content.(5)

Over 50% of the advertising was identical. Some local news was 80% duplication.(6) The papers did admit to backing different presidential candidates but this is the only difference noted.(7) The second voice then appeared to be no different from the first in Washington, Indiana.

Up to this point, only competing papers had been examined. It appears that there were no differences between competing newspapers and that they were indeed 'rivals in conformity.' Later journal reports turned to an examination of the differences between media in a competitive situation and those in a monopoly situation.

In a 1956 report, Gerard Borstell addressed a number of questions, one of which is of direct interest to this study. He tried to discover if monopoly papers exhibit any tendency to take it upon themselves to present more than one side of debatable issues and thus to compensate for the absence of a rival journal.(8) He examined twenty newspapers, six monopoly independents, six monopoly chain newspapers, and four pairs of competing nonchain papers, over a one-week period. No consistent differences were found in the comment regarding the ownership or competitive status.(9) Differences appeared to be more related to city size than to the competitiveness of the market.(10) The one notable difference was rather surprising. Competing press were less likely to print letters to the editor than monopoly

press.(11) Borstell suggests that a monopoly paper, more aware of the charges to which it is open, prints more letters to the editor to ensure representation of many viewpoints. This suggestion, however, was made after the results were tabulated. Testing of this particular hypothesis under research conditions might yield different results than those suggested by Borstell. In general, however, there were no substantial differences between competitive and monopoly newspapers.

Raymond B. Nixon and Robert L. Jones also attempted to study differences between competing papers, and between competing and monopoly press. They employed data from four sources: The Continuing Study on Newspaper Questions, Media Reports Inc, the International Press Institute and matched cities' newspaper content. They performed a fairly extensive study on a variety of papers. Using data from the Continuing Study on Newspapers, they examined 53 competitive and 44 noncompetitive papers, one issue of each, spread over a 13-year period. With readership data on these same papers available, the researchers were able to examine an extra area. Nixon and Jones also matched 13 pairs of papers. Each pair contained one competitive and one noncompetitive paper of a similar size, region and deadline. These 26 papers were examined over a two-week period (Monday-Friday) period. They performed a secondary analysis on the data of

the International Press Institute's study of 93 United States dailies' coverage of foreign news and also on the Media Records Incorporated's "Yearly Content Analysis of Morning, Evening and Sunday Newspapers." They performed reliability tests, stability tests, pretests, tests during the coding and retests over time. They felt that there would be no statistically significant differences between competitive and monopoly papers. Their findings are similar to the work of others. They state that "In none of the 17 categories is there a significant difference in space allocation between competitive and noncompetitive papers".(12) Contrary to Borstell's work, the only difference they found was that competitive papers printed more letters to the editor than did the average noncompetitive dailies in this study.(13) Nixon and Jones did see some small differences. A monopoly press is likely to have less advertising and more foreign news, although, as with Borstell's work, they found that circulation and issue size might be more important than competitive status in determining content.(14)

Galen Rarick and Barrie Hartman published an article in 1966 studying the effects of changes in competitive status on a newspaper's content. The TriCity Herald, serving Kennewick, Pasco and Richland, Washington, began in a monopoly situation, experienced an intense rivalry for a few

years, and became a virtual monopoly later in its history. By examining its content in each of the three periods, they hoped to find that there were differences between monopoly and competitive situations. They examined 54 issues of the paper. They did find differences that supported their hypothesis. They felt that in a competitive situation papers devoted more space to local content and that competition also resulted in an increase in sensational and human interest comment.(15) They found that the percentage of news and features, pictures and editorials peaked during the competitive stage.(16) They also found that sensational and human interest news was more prevalent during the competitive period.(17)

This work leaves one with many questions. Most importantly, one must question the findings in light of the time frame chosen. By examining the paper in 1948-1949, 1955-1956, and 1962-1963, differences might appear that are due to changes in the newspaper industry generally over 15 years and not due to different competitive situations. This is not to suggest that Rarick and Hartman's work is incorrect, but rather that this temporal explanation of their findings remains a viable alternative to the one they advance. Had they compared the results in each time frame against a monopoly and competitive paper of the same period, their analysis might have yielded more confidence that

competitive status was the source of the differences noted.

Indeed, Barrie Hartman's M.A. thesis examined the same paper and for the same time period as that studied by Rarick and Hartman, and he concluded "it remains debatable whether competition and noncompetition were of any greater or lesser importance than any other influences."(18) He bases his conclusion on the fact that there were too many uncontrollable factors (such as increased facilities and technology) to claim that competition was behind the differences found in the content over the time period.(19)

Gerald Grotta examined changes in ownership structures, from 1950-1968 with particular regards to economic implications. By using a control group that had no competitive status change, and a reaction group that experienced a loss in competition, Grotta hoped to eliminate most unrelated variables. He examined quality variables that also affected cost. For example, he compared space devoted to local news and non-local news and he looked at the change in number of editorial employees. He concluded that consumers received no benefits from the economies of scale of monopolies.(20) He also found that the only area where a significant difference occured was in regards to price. He stated "that the evidence indicates that consumers pay higher prices under consolidated ownership with no compensating increase in quality or quantity of

product received and perhaps a decrease in quality."(21) Yet, on the whole, Grotta found no outstanding "quality" differences (e.g. number of editorial employees) as a result of monopoly status.

Fred Fletcher's report for the Royal Commission on Newspapers, The Newspaper and Public Affairs, deals extensively with the competitive status of a newspaper and its effects on the product. His work is based mainly on interviews and reviews of the work of others, although several pieces of research were considered. His report contains conflicting views on the role of competition. On the one hand, competition increases public affairs coverage and editorial comment(22); on the other hand, Fletcher states that competition can result in pressures to dramatize, simplify or trivialize the news.(23) The lack of competition can reduce the priority given to political news(24), or it can free the reporter from routine coverage and allow them to investigate and analyze.(25) Monopoly papers are more likely to avoid partisan endorsements, citing duty to represent all sides.(26) This appears to be the only area where monopoly press differs from competitive press. Whether expressing a partisan stance is fair is not at issue here, only that this is an area where monopoly and competitive press differ. Fletcher also points to public officials who complain about the lack of alternate outlets

for arguments(27) as an area where monopolies fall behind competitive papers. Bogart agrees, claiming that monopoly situations foster complacency and atrophy editorial enterprise.(28) Fletcher concludes that, in spite of the negative effects, competition is superior to monopoly situations in their social responsibility. However, Fletcher failed to back up his statements with more than hypothetical conjecture and anecdotal evidence from disgruntled public servants and newspaper staff. His work is open to the allegation made by a member of the British Royal Commission, MacGregor, about the entire Kent Commission. MacGregor wondered if a report can be assembled in 10 months and, as noted above, provide the detail necessary to support a sweeping condemnation of monopoly press.(29)

John Schweitzer and Elaine Goldman approach the question of monopoly press from a previously unexamined perspective. Competition, they claim, is an assumed good - there is no evidence that the mass media consumer needs, or even wants, dissenting voices.(30) Their study of the death of a paper in Bloomington, Indiana, gave them the chance to study what the public felt about the loss of competition. Using much of Rarick's and Hartman's work as their base, Schweitzer and Goldman found their results more similar to Bigman and Nixon and Jones than those whose work they were

studying. They concluded that "for the intended audience, the presence or absence of daily competiton does not seem to make much difference."(31) The readers found no difference between monopoly and competitive times.

In 1962, Jack Lyle studied the merger of four papers into two in Los Angeles, California. One morning and one evening daily were merged in two separate deals. However the merger left the remaining two newspapers, one morning and one evening, in a monopoly for that time period. The public's reaction, he claimed, was one of abstract regret rather than one of concrete realization of a loss in competition.(32) His telephone survey of 200 readers is perhaps a weak data base from which to make such inferences.

Nixon undertook a study of reader's attitudes to measure audience reactions to monopoly situations. Conducted in the early 1950's, the study found that at that time,

> ...single ownership dailies stood even higher in their readers' esteem in 1953 than in studies made 2 to 4 years earlier, and generally higher than newspapers in a competitive city; there is evident (sic) a growing tendency for papers to be judged on their merits, rather than upon the basis of less relevant factors.(33)

It appears then that the readers perceive no noticeable change in a newspaper without competition. Indeed, they seem to hold monopoly papers in high esteem. This seems to

correlate with the review of the literature. The majority of works examined found no significant differences between monopoly and competitive papers that makes one superior than the other.

This section has provided much of the rationale for the adoption of the thesis that there are no statistically significant differences in a paper's political content due to monopoly or competitive status. Even those who did find that competition made a difference were challenged in their conclusions or were moved to qualify their support for competition.(34) Thus the thesis does appear to have support in the literature.

Study Approach: Hypotheses and Methods

The next step in the examination of the question is to narrow the broad hypothesis into several manageable ones. The specific hypotheses to be studied are generated in the main from the previous work on the effects of competitive status on newspapers' content. Simply put, the thesis is that "there will be no statistically significant differences in political content between the monopoly and competitive editions of each paper." The reason for examining 'political' content is discussed below.

The purpose or reason for having newspapers, as discussed above, is to provide information for the public on

the events that shape their lives. In contemporary times, newspapers serve a much broader function than merely informing the public about the key political events of the day. Nonpolitical functions, sometimes labelled "discojournalism,"(35) are the basis for circulation games with other papers and other media. Differences between monopoly and competitive papers could occur in regards to this "discojournalism," but it would not be perceived as a serious threat to the social responsibility of the media. If differences between monopoly and competitive papers occur with regards to the political content of the paper, the champions of competitive press might have a basis for their complaints against the monopoly press.

Kent suggested a reason for the importance of political news in the report of the Royal Commission on Newspapers:

> The essential connection between a healthy independent and diversified press and democratic vitality had been noted since state authority in Europe gave up licensing printed matter. Society in North America has been influenced by newspapers whose founding purpose, highest calling and basic support, highminded or otherwise, originated in the world of politics.(36)

The relationship between political news and the mass media is a well established although not altogether a smooth one. The views of the politician and the media on what is important or necessary for the public to know often differs.

It was decided that if differences were to occur, the area of concern is the political content of the newspaper. The definition of political content, as it applies to this thesis, will be expanded later in the chapter, as will the method of determining if differences do exist.

Another important function of a newspaper is to provide a forum for debate. This includes letters to the editor, which allows for direct feedback to an article. As well, it includes editorializing, in order to "declare which alternative the editors prefer and to give the arguments for the choice,"(37) and thus allow the readers to see a perspective other than their own. This area of comment is the second major area of study. This too will be elaborated below.

The most frequently employed and the most effective method of studying newspapers thus far has been content analysis. Content analysis

> aims at a quantitative classification of a given body of content, in terms of a system of categories devised to yield data relevant to specific hypotheses concerning that content.(38)

This method is rather simplistic - it involves defining categories, and then counting the number of times an item fits into each category. The simple measuring of inches or counting the number of times a subject is mentioned is

referred to as quantitative content analysis. This is adequate for some forms of study, but is often limited when dealing with "the nuances of writing"(39) and is deemed "insensitive and shallow to political insights."(40) Thus the quantitative methods often overlook the richness of data supplied by qualitative analysis.

Qualitative analysis, however, is not without its flaws. Its methodology is usually much more open to subjectivity than quantitative analysis. The decisions to be made when coding are based on what the coder perceives the definition to mean and what the coder perceives the subject to reflect.

This study attempts to use both methods, quantitative in measuring political content, and qualitative in examining editorial comment. It is hoped that by using both forms of content analysis, each method will be able to overshadow the problems of the other.

Before political content can be measured quantitatively, it must be defined. Likewise, before an evaluation of editorials can be made, some thought must be given to determining qualitatively the method to be used. Before either of these decisions can be made, however, several possible problems with qualitative analysis must be addressed.

Irving Janis cites two major types of errors occuring when one tries to define exhaustive categories to capture all the data. First, errors occur due to ambiguity in terms used; secondly, errors occur due to ambiguity in concepts used.(41) To avoid the first type of error, one must try to use definitions that are clear and concise. Pretesting the terms, which helps to determine any ambiguity in the definition, was used here to help define the necessary concepts. To avoid the second type of error, it is necessary to ensure that content analysts understand thoroughly all the details of this work. This was controlled in the study by using only one coder, whose work was checked using a second analyst coding a sample of the same data. A test for intercoder reliability was then performed. Janis's article is but one of many dealing with content analysis which suggest that the use of precise definitions and intercoder reliability are the best ways to ensure reliable categories and reliable qualitative decisions.(42)

Thus two possible problems which might affect the test can be reduced if not eliminated. To determine what political content is, an examination of how others have defined political content is helpful.

"Rivals in Conformity," Stanley Bigman's article about competing press in Pottsville, Pennsylvania, examines "news

of potentially controversial subjects, as politics, labour, business and industry, and minorities."(43) Bigman, however, goes no further in the article to distinguish between stories about politics and other stories. Thus there would be problems in replicating this study. His method is also not sufficiently detailed to allow use of it here. He suggests only a study, qualitative in character, "based on a complete reading" of the papers, with special attention given to the "potentially controversial" stories. This is not an adequate methodology for use in this study. His work also entailed interviews with leading citizens in the community and surrounding area. His reference to his methods in the results suggest the typical approach to quantitative content analysis - measurement of space allocation. The qualitative results seem based on examination of stories and editorials for their similarities and differences. These differences and similarities are determined by the individual coder.

Wesley Willoughby, in "Are Two Competing Dailies Necessarily Better Than One," looked at the competing press of Washington, Indiana. Political news here was defined as "all items containing non-evaluative facts; statements with social or political referents which could potentially influence the attitude of a reader."(44) Willoughby's definition leaves much room for individual coder

decision-making. He uses "political" in his definition of political news, which in itself causes problems. This however, is not as important as the problems with the phrase "could potentially influence." This statement is sufficiently imprecise to allow two coders to arrive at different decisions as to whether an article is political news.

In this study by Willoughby, the method used for analyzing political news seems to be qualitative. The papers were examined for similarities and what was different and the same in those stories. As well, he looked at the subject matter of stories appearing in only one paper. In addition, Willoughby looked for "any influences of political bias," based on the information that the two papers were supportive of different political parties."(45) Willoughby's analytic schema is not further developed - it appears as if similarities and differences are determined by the coder alone. There is not enough information specifying coding decisions in the paper to attempt to use them here. This leaves serious limitations in the section of his paper dealing with political news.

Nixon and Jones had at their disposal a large body of data upon which to test their hypothesis about the content of competitive and noncompetitive newspapers. They based their classification scheme and methodology on "A Study of

the Content of Selected U.S. Dailies," compiled by four collaborating schools of journalism in 1948. They did not elaborate on either the definition of political news or their methodology. However, they do cite their attempt to ensure reliability through practice runs, cross-coder tests and consistency through time tests.(46) While their method may have been quite adequate, the lack of information about the method makes it impossible to adopt here.

Another work dealing with political news and competitive status is Rarick and Hartman's 1966 article entitled "The Effects of Competition on One Daily Newspaper's Content." Rarick and Hartman do not define political news. They examine news-editorial items and use the broad category of news and feature to capture most of what is of interest here. This is further broken down into four categories (excluding international news) as follows: crime-vice, accidents-disasters, government and education.(47) Their categories are broad enough to make coding decisions fairly easy, but this also makes their findings very general. Their methodology is fairly simple. The stories are coded as to the above categories, and measured for size. Comparisons are made on this basis. Thus Rarick and Hartman use an imprecise definition and a fairly simple method to achieve their results.

Schweitzer's and Goldman's study of the readers' reaction to a loss of competition and to competition itself was more concerned with immediate vs. delay reward news than in defining political news.(48) Their work gives no breakdown of categories. David Weaver and L.E. Mullins look at the relationship between content and success in a competitive situation. They do give a breakdown of their results but their category names are too broad to help define political news for use here.(49) Their definitions were apparently given to the coders beforehand, but were not included in their report.

Chilton Bush lists 48 categories of news, but these are so specific that one suspects that the vastness of categories makes coding even more difficult.(50) In describing an action of the United States government, one must choose between "our nation," "governmental acts," "politics" or several of the related topics (e.g., taxes, economic activities, defense, atomic energy, allies, judicial proceedings, communism in the U.S.A.). It becomes apparent that the detailed definitions might run into the problem of becoming too specific to be useful, as well as of placing the same value on two items that have different degrees of importance to the public.

To date, most of the definitions of political news or categorization of news in general have not focused on the

area of concern to this study. In defining political news, a re-examination of the definition of the functions of the press would be helpful. The Davey report felt that the media should prepare its readers for social, political and economic change in their lives.(51) As governments are the main actors in determining the social, political and economic life of its citizens, the definition of political news used here centres on the ruling elite.

For the purpose of this study, political news "concerns events which are about or which seek to alter the direction of government policy, or concerns events which are about or which seek to alter the mandate of the ruling elite." This definition of government and ruling elite includes all forms of government from monarchial and ogopolistic to democratic and communist. As well its includes all levels of government. It should be pointed out here that regular columnists, usually identified with a picture or letterhead, will not be included as political news, regardless of content. Political news seeks to convey the facts, and to provide understanding. The columnists, by virtue of their status, are using their name to support particular opinion, and are not bound by social responsibility to remain unbiased, because they are recognized as editorial opinion writers.

The individual working hypotheses will be stated in terms of expectations regarding differences between monopoly and competitive periods. This will allow for the creation of rejection regions and significance levels that will have meaning in the analysis. The reports studied thus far indicate very little agreement on the effects of competitive status. As a result, the rewording of the thesis is also valid academically. Thus, the thesis will be stated such that a difference will be expected, and the null hypothesis will be that there are no differences.

The quantitative analysis of political news involves the measurement of articles in square centimeters with headlines measured separately. The size devoted to political news is one area where differences between the two periods could occur. Two variables which have also appeared in the literature and deal with political news are the locale and the source of the stories. Several articles mentioned above examined the locale of the story. The breakdown to be adopted here for the study of locale is as follows: international, American, Canadian-American, federal, out-of-province, in-province, and local. Two schools of thought exist on this question. Some feel that non-local news will be less frequent in a monopoly situation because it costs more to have a correspondent abroad than at home, (52) and that in a monopoly situation there is no need

to go to that extra expense. Others feel that local stories will be less frequent in a monopoly situation because it is cheaper to buy a non-local wire service story than to have a local reporter research and write stories.(53) This same cost-related reasoning is applied to the examination of the source of the story. Locally written stories are often more costly than wire stories. Thus, if a monopoly paper is attempting to cut costs, one area might be in the number of in-house stories.

There are opposing views which claim that only in a monopoly will the paper have the time to spend on indepth locally written investigative pieces.(54) Regardless of the rationale for the decisions, the source of the article might prove to be a factor in determining differences between competitive and monopoly papers. By examining both the source of the story and the locale, it can be determined if competitive status affects the local character of the paper.

Other data concerning aspects of the political news will be collected and analyzed. Richard Budd(55) examined the "news play" of each story, by assigning it an attention score. He looked at one Australian and one New Zealand newspaper and found that, although both covered the same story, the "news play" it received in each was different. He looked at factors such as the size of the headline, quadrant located in on the page, and page of the article in

relation to a key feature such as the editorial page. These factors will also be examined here because if competitive status affects the political content of newspapers, the difference might be in the prominence certain types of stories receive. Budd was comparing the difference in presentation of the same story in two papers. This is not the issue here. The values that Budd placed on different factors will not be used. The issue under examination is differences between competitive times, and as such, differences between the placement of articles will be noted but no value judgement will be placed upon the prominence different placements warrant. Fletcher noted that public affairs writers complained that they could not get space to analyze important issues because of the competition waged on non-political stories. The public affairs writers felt that space was being allocated to non-political stories, and that political stories got less prominence in competitive papers.(56) Thus the placement of political news stories will be studied for differences.

As mentioned above, letters to the editor is one area where opposite results have been achieved as to the effects of competitive status.(57) Measuring the square centimeters devoted to letters to the editor should reveal any significant differences in competitive times.

In addition to the study of letters to the editor, political comment on the editorial pages will be measured and counted to determine if differences exist between competitive periods in the amount of political comment the editorial pages contain. Political comment is not to be confused with editorials. Political comment is signed and located on the editorial pages. The regular columnists that are not studied are those appearing scattered throughout the newspaper (e.g. sports editorial writers and community happenings columnists).

The last area of study is that of the editorial. For this study, the editorial is the unsigned, in-house opinion found on the editorial pages. The signed columnists on the editorial pages will be counted in the political comment section of the newspaper.

A qualitative approach is necessary to study the editorial. Alex George describes qualitative content analysis as the "nonfrequency approach," its value lying with matters "not cut and dried." Qualitative content analysis places "more emphasis upon obtaining valid estimates of the speaker's intended meaning."(58) The editorial function depends on what is said, not so much on what it is about. Thus a qualitative analysis should prove of more value to the determination of differences between competitive and monopoly papers.

The majority of the works dealing with editorials treated them in the same qualitative/quantitative manner that they used in dealing with the rest of the newspaper. Most, however, do point to several areas in particular that they feel are important in examining editorials. Fletcher's study for the Kent Commission dealt extensively with the ability or willingness of publishers to take concrete stands on issues in monopoly and competitive situations. He found that monopoly papers were less likely to take a partisan stand at election times than competitive papers.(59)

To see if the stance of the editorial is a factor that varies across competitive situtations, the editorials were examined to determine if they took a stand on candidates and/or issues. Making a negative comment is much more open to controversy than a positive or neutral one. As such, several of the comparisons were made with this one aspect of the stance variable. The coding of the editorials to determine if they had a stand (neutral, positive, negative) was based on a subjective evaluation of the editorial. A pretest was undertaken with several undergraduate students to determine if they could reach an acceptable level of intercoder reliability through their evaluation of the stance of the editorial. Most researchers examined, who touched on the stance of the editorial, used the judgement of the coder to make the decision of the direction of the

editorial.(60) Thus, the lack of a definition of the categories of stance should not be seen as an omission, but merely as part of the standard procedure for this variable.

There is the suggestion that non-local editorials become more prevalent in monopoly papers as the publishers wish to avoid offending the local citizenry.(61) The publishers feel that other media, or non-local press will cover the non-local news and thus the audience has access to alternate perspectives on these issues.(62) The issue of the locale of the editorials has been examined in several papers(63) and it appears to be an area where differences, if apparent, could be important. Thus, the locale of the editorial will be considered. The local editorial will be centred out for extra analysis to determine if there are any differences in the stance, purpose and political nature of local character of the editorial over competitive periods.

The editorials were also examined to determine if they were political or not. It has been suggested that political editorials, with their potential for controversy, will be less prevalent in monopoly newspapers. The reasoning is that monopoly papers will be afraid to offend or upset the readers.(64) An examination of this will be done using the definition of political derived for the examination of political content of news.

The last area to be examined in an editorial is that of its purpose. Willoughby suggested a breakdown of purpose into advocacy, interpretation and entertainment.(65) Willoughby includes non-political columnists for consideration. As this study does not examine this type of editorial there is no pressing need to have an entertainment category for editorial purpose. The editorials will be classified as either advocating something - exhorting either the reader or the subject of the editorial to take action - or interpretation - discussing the situation at hand to provide further insight. The pretest will also seek to examine the reliability of this measure.

Data Base

The areas to be examined having been outlined, the study now discusses the particular body of data that will be used to test the hypothesis. The study consists of an examination of two newspapers, the Edmonton Journal and the Ottawa Citizen. Both newspapers have, since 1977, experienced periods of competition and noncompetition. The Edmonton Journal was in a monopolistic period until the Sun commenced publishing in 1978. The Ottawa Citizen became monopolistic in 1980, with the demise of the Ottawa Journal. Thus an examination of the two newspapers in both competitive situations should provide an adequate data base

for testing the hypothesis. An examination of circulation figures for the years under examination reflects little change.

Figure 1

Circulation Figures

	Edmonton	Ottawa
Monopoly	159,574 (1977)	132,835 (1981)
Competitive	159,730 (1979)	115,175 (1979)

Source: Ayer Directory of Publication, Ayer Press

The Citizen picked up circulation with the demise of the Ottawa Journal. The Edmonton Journal slightly increased its circulation with the arrival of the Sun. Both of the competing papers respresented a much smaller circulation than the leading paper. As both papers experienced reversed competitive changes, the effects of competition, if any, should be consistent across the papers when they were in comparable competitive situations. The specific time periods to be studied are:

Ottawa: September to December 1979 (competitive)
September to December 1981 (monopoly)

Edmonton: September to December 1977 (monopoly)
September to December 1979 (competitive)

Two issues of each paper per week will be examined, using the following breakdown: Monday-Thursday, Tuesday-Friday, and Wednesday-Saturday. This will provide a data base of

128 newspapers, 32 of each paper in each competitive period.

As a result of using a limited time span (1977-1981), any differences noted should have been as a result of differences in competitive situations and not due to any sweeping technological changes. As well, the four-month time spread for each paper should preclude any one sensational story from distorting the results. Alexander Mintz supports this choice of a broad time spectrum. He claims that a sample should consist of "non-consecutive days, evenly spaced so that different portions of the trend function are represented."(66) The days and months are spaced such that the results may avoid any of the trends that Mintz feels could affect them.

To ensure that the project could be replicated, pretests of the measures to be used were conducted. Specifically, the term 'political news' was tested as well as the measures for the stance and the purpose of the editorial.

In pretesting the terms for the editorial, four undergraduate students at Wilfrid Laurier University were read the definitions of political news, the purpose variables (advocacy and interpretation), and were told to make their own judgement as to the stance of the editorial - positive, negative or neutral. A sample of 20 Winnipeg Free Press editorials was selected over a two-month period

(September-October 1981). The Free Press was chosen as it was not under study here, it was a comparable metropolitan daily, and was available for use.

The coders agreed among themselves 96% of the time on what was political, 85% of the time on the purpose, and 81% of the time on the stance. It was decided that the definition of political news was adequate for editorials. An attempt was made to improve the intercoder agreement on the variables of purpose and stance.

After discussions with the coders, it was determined that part of the problem lay in what Janis called a type I error,(67) ambiguity in terms used. "Advocacy" and "interpretation" were further defined in an attempt to reduce ambiguity in the terms. The new definitions are as follows:

> advocacy: suggests a course of action; involves the verb 'to do'; implies responsibility to act.
>
> interpretation: analyze, provide new information or new point of view to put the issue into perspective; provide insights, synthesize the situation.

In addition, it was discovered that in determining the stance of the editorial, the problem appeared to be in deciding on the main subject of the editorial. This decision, as to subject, greatly affected the perceived tone of the editorial.(68) The coders felt that the subject of

the editorial should be determined by the headline.(69) This was adopted for use in the study.

With these new decision rules set out, the coders examined an additional ten editorials of the Winnipeg Free Press. The new results, however, did not support the faith the coders had in the new coding instructions. The level of agreement on stance was 82%, barely a 1% improvement, while the agreement on purpose dropped to 80% from 85%. Examinations of the coding decisions showed that one coder had been in disagreement with the others 30% of the time. Janis suggested that type II errors(70) are caused by ambiguity in concepts used, caused mainly by inadequate coders. It was then decided that perhaps the problem lay not in the definitions, but in this one coder. As a result, his coding decisions were removed from both pretests and new results calculated. In the first pretest, the levels of agreement increased markedly. Political news was agreed upon 98%, stance 90%, and purpose 88%. The new definitions increased the agreement in purpose to 93%. The slight decrease in the agreement level on stance (from 90% to 87%) is perhaps a result of using such a small sample. Regardless of the decrease, it still appears that all measures are fairly reliable for editorials. Nixon and Jones cite 89% agreement amongst coders in their work(71), and this is close to the levels achieved here.

The definition of political news, as applied to editorials caused little disagreement among the coders (3%). However, editorials, by their nature, tend to dwell on political content (only 10% of the sample editorials were coded not political). In order to apply this definition with confidence to the data base as a whole, it was necessary to have a test on the coding decisions regarding political content.

An undergraduate student at Wilfrid Laurier University agreed to code a sample of the papers to be used for the study. This served not only to check the reliability of the definition of political content, but also to check the original coder's consistency. The sample consisted of 16 papers, one per month per time period, chosen randomly from the data base. The 16 newspapers were read, coded and compared to the original coder. The level of agreement was 73%. This seemed to be rather low, and an investigation of the results was undertaken. It was discovered that the test coder had not found any local stories he felt were important, in spite of a local election occurring. He felt that local stories had no effect on the ruling elite. He did not perceive local governments as ruling elite. This then caused the definition of political news to be revised to include the specific mention that all levels of government, from international tribunals to city hall were

part of the ruling elite. This appears to be what Janis called a type II error(72), resulting from using coders not acquainted with content analysis. To determine a closer approximation of the level of agreement once the aberration was determined, all local stories were removed from the first coder's results and the two compared again. The new level of agreement was 84%. This is much stronger and more acceptable. It should be noted that the pretesters of editorials had no trouble in determining political from non-political editorials (97% agreement). The lower level of agreement in this pretest may be due to a poor choice of coder. The results however are acceptable in light of the editorial pretest.

A summary lists the tests carried out. On political news, the areas examined are: the number of stories, the size of the articles, the size of the headlines, the average size of an article (including the headline), the size per issue, the number of pages per issue, the placement of the story relative to the editorial page, the quadrant of the page in which the story is placed, the source and the locale. Editorials were examined for: the number per paper, the proportion negative, proportion advocating, proportion political and proportion local per paper. The local editorials were examined for the proportion negative, proportion advocating and proportion political. The comment

and letters to the editor were examined for size, number and average per paper.

Endnotes

1. Bigman, "Rivals in Conformity," p. 128.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., p. 131.

4. Ibid.

5. Willoughby, "Are Two Competing Dailies Necessarily Better than One," p. 204.

6. Ibid., p. 203.

7. Ibid., p. 204.

8. Borstell, "Ownership, Competition and Comment in 20 Small Dailies," p. 220.

9. Ibid., p. 221.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Raymond B. Nixon and Robert L. Jones, "The Content of Noncompetition vs Competition Newspapers," Journalism Quarterly 33 (1956): 306.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid., p. 310.

15. Galen Rarick and Barrie M. Hartman, "Effects of Competition on 1 Daily Newspaper's Content," Journalism Quarterly 43 (1966): 460.

16. Ibid., p. 461.

17. Ibid., p. 462.

18. Barrie Monroe Hartman, "The Effects of Competition and the Decline of Competition on the Content of a Daily Newspaper" (M.A. thesis, University of Oregon, December 1965), p. 156.

19. Ibid.

20. Gerald Grotta, "Consolidation of Newspapers: What happens to the consumer," Journalism Quarterly 48 (Spring 1971): 249.

21. ————, "Changes in Ownership Structure of Daily Newspapers and Selected Performance Characteristics 1950-1968 (Ph.D. dissertation, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale Illinois, 1970), p. 52.

22. Fletcher Report, p. 41.

23. Ibid., p. 40.

24. Ibid., p. 65.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid., pp. 83-84.

27. Ibid., p. 41.

28. Leo Bogart, "Editorial Ideals, Editorial Illusions," in Newspapers and Democracy, edited by Anthony Smith (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1980), p. 265.

29. Etherington, "They came not to praise Kent's report," p. 21.

30. Schweitzer and Goldman, "Does Newspaper Competition Make a Difference to Readers," p. 706.

31. Ibid., p. 710.

32. Jack Lyle, "Audience Impact of a Double Merger," Journalism Quarterly 39:2 (Spring 1962): 150.

33. Nixon, "Changes in Reader's Attitudes Toward Daily Newspapers," Journalism Quarterly 31 (Fall 1954): 433.

34. Rarick and Hartman were refuted by Schweitzer and Goldman and Fletcher wondered if perhaps journalistic tradition and conventions were of more importance than ownership or competition.

35. Fletcher Report, p. 40.

36. Kent Commission, p. 136.

37. Bo Ohlstrom, "Information and Progaganda: A Content Analysis of Editorials in 4 Swedish Daily Newspapers," Journal of Peace Research 3(1966): 75.

38. Bernard Berelson, Content Analysis in Communication Research (New York: Hafner Publications Company, 1971), p. 15.

39. Seigfreid Kracauer, "The Challange of Qualitative Content Analysis," Public Opinion Quarterly 16:4(1952-3): 16.

40. Klaus Krippendorf, Content Analysis: An Introduction to its Methodology (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1980), p. 17.

41. Irving Janis, "The Problem of Validating Content Analysis," in Language of Politics: Studies in Quantitative Semantics, edited by Harold Lasswell, Nathan Leites and Associates (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1965, originally published in 1949), p. 61.

42. See Chilton R. Bush and Jane Cook, "The Measurement of Editorial Attitudes," Journalism Quarterly 12(1935): 367-373; Bush, "A System of Categories for General News Content," Journalism Quarterly 37:2(1960): 206-210; Ole Holsti, Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1969); Abraham Kaplan and Joseph Goldsen, "The Reliability of Content Analysis Categories," in The Language of Politics, edited by Lasswell et. al., pp. 83-112; Charles Osgood, "The Representational Model and Relevant Research Models," in Trends in Content Analysis, edited by Ithiel de Sola Pool (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956), pp. 33-88; William Schutz, "On Categorizing Qualitative Data in Content Analysis," Public Opinion Quarterly 22:4 (1958): 503-508.

43. Bigman, "Rivals in Conformity," p. 128.

44. Willoughby, "Are Two Competing Dailies Necessarily Better Than One," p. 204.

45. Ibid., p. 200.

46. Nixon and Jones, "The Content of Noncompetiton vs Competition Newspapers," p. 305.

47. Rarick and Hartman, "Effects of Competition on 1 Daily Newspaper's Content," pp. 460-461.

48. Schweitzer and Goldman, "Does Newspaper Competition Make a Difference to Readers," p. 707. Immediate reward news provides the reader with stories whose value is immediately attainable. Delay reward stories requires thought and reflection to receive the maximum benefits of the story.

49. David H. Weaver and L.E. Mullins, "Content and Format Characteristics of Competing Daily Newspapers," Journalism Quarterly 52(1975): 206.

50. Bush, "A System of Categories for General News Content," pp. 208-210.

51. Davey, "The Davey Report: In Retrospect," in Communications in Canadian Society, edited by Singer, pp. 182-183.

52. Fletcher Report, p. 42.

53. Kent Commission, p. 110.

54. Fletcher Report, p. 40; p. 65.

55. Richard Budd, "Attention Score: A Device for Measuring News Play," Journalism Quarterly 41(1964): 260.

56. Fletcher Report, p. 40.

57. For example, Willoughby, in his article "Are Two Competing Dailies Necessarily Better Than One," p. 202, found no differences; Nixon and Jones found monopolies had fewer letters to the editor, "The Content of Noncompetition vs Competition Newspapers," p. 306; Borstell found the competing press had fewer letters to the editor, "Ownership, Competition and Comment in 20 Small Dailies," p. 221.

58. Alexander George, "Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches to Content Analysis," in Trends in Content Analysis, edited by Pool, p. 10.

59. Fletcher Report, p. 114.

60. Several authors attempt to solve the coding of stance. A. Geller, D. Kaplan and H. Lasswell, "The Experimental Comparison of Four Ways of Coding Editorial Content," Journalism Quarterly 19 (1942): 354, defined each stance as presentation in a favourable light, unfavourable light or neutral. No further discussion is given. Lasswell, "The Politically Significant Content of the Press, Coding Prodcedures," Journalism Quarterly 19 (1942): 12-23, rates all items on a positive-negative-neutral stance, using the coders' native land to provide the rationale for the choice. M. Gabel and H. Gabel, "Texas Newspaper Opinion," Public Opinion Quarterly 10(1946): 57-70, 201-215, examine several Texas newspapers for stance and make no mention of method used. Ole Holsti, Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities, discusses the reliability, relying on overall impression of the article and cites Lasswell's 70% level of agreement. The pretests in this paper showed a minimum of 77% agreement and a high of 97% agreement on stance.

61. Sandman, Rubin and Sachsman, Media, p. 119, touch on this idea. As well, Seymour-Ure, The Political Impact of the Mass Media, p. 81 and Borstell, "Ownership, Competition and Comment in 20 Small Dailies," p. 201, make mention of this area.

62. Kent Commission, p. 139.

63. Bigman, "Rivals in Conformity," p. 128, Borstell, "Ownership, Competition and Comment in 20 Small Dailies," p. 221, and Willoughby, "Are Two Competing Dailies Necessarily Better Than One," pp. 200-201, all found that, in examining competing papers, one always ran a much greater proportion of local-oriented editorials. Schweitzer and Goldman, "Does Newspaper Competition Make a Difference to Readers," p. 709, found that as competition declined local editorials increased. Nixon and Jones, "The Content of Noncompetition vs Competition Newspapers," pp. 306-307, found that competitive papers ran slightly more local editorials, although the differences were not statistically significant. Rarick and Hartman, "Effects of Competition on 1 Daily Newspaper's Content," pp. 460-461, found that the percentage of space devoted to local editorials declined over intense and minimal competition from that in a noncompetitive position. They rationalize the results claiming that, in absolute numbers, their hypothesis is supported, and as competition increased, local editorials do.

64. Borstell, "Ownership, Competition and Comment in 20 Small Dailies," p. 201.

65. Willoughby, "Are Two Competing Dailies Necessarily Better Than One," p. 201.

66. Alexander Mintz, "The Feasibility of the Use of Samples in Content Analysis," in The Language of Politics, edited by Lasswell et. al., p. 135.

67. Janis, "The Problem of Validating Content Analysis," in The Language of Politics, edited by Lasswell et. al., p. 61.

68. An example of the problem is demonstrated by the editorial on industrial illness. Entitled "Tackle industrial illness", (Winnipeg Free Press, October 23, 1981) the coders split in their decision. Three felt the editorial was negative towards industrial illness. The fourth coded it positive, citing the efforts to clean up the problem. All four agreed that the problem was in determining the subject - the illness or the efforts to tackle it.

69. In the example, the editorial would be coded positive towards the efforts in tackling the illness.

70. Janis, "The Problem of Validating Content Analysis," in The Language of Politics, Edited by Lasswell et. al., p. 61.

71. Nixon and Jones, "The Content of Competition vs Noncompetition Newspapers," p. 306.

72. Janis, "The Problem of Validating Content Analysis," in The Language of Politics, p. 61.

Chapter III Analysis

The results of the various tests generated statistics from which few definite conclusions could be drawn. The work here reveals little evidence of substantive effects on the various political content areas which could be attributed with confidence to competitive status. Not all the results were straightforward and often the results in Ottawa were in conflict with the results in Edmonton. The hypotheses were worded such that statistically significant differences were expected. The differences must reflect a similar trend in both cities in order for the conclusions to have any universal applicability. In other words, both competitive newspapers should show the same relationship to the noncompetitive newspaper. If competitive status does cause consistent statistically significant differences, the analysis should reveal that both competitive newspapers produced values that reflect a similar degree and direction of differences towards the monopoly newspaper. Thus, the differences or the direction of the trend must be similar in order to apply the findings to a broader scenario.

The results of the political news testing revealed very few occasions where the two test newspapers displayed agreement about the trend of the differences. In addition, few differences were found to be statistically significant at the .05 level.(1) More often than not, the results from the two cities contradicted themselves.

None of the results generated by the editorial-oriented variables were statistically significant at the .05 level and this supports the thesis of the study. Competition appeared to have no discernable influence on the editorials.

Political comment and letters to the editor reflected the uncertainty of previous investigations. The Edmonton Journal showed a statistically significant difference in all categories and all the differences favoured the competitive paper. In Ottawa, however, the results showed few statistically significant differences across any of the variables examined. However, any differences that did occur in one city seemed to contradict the results of the other city studied. These results will be discussed in detail later in the chapter.(2)

In many ways, comparisons of the results in Edmonton and Ottawa were impossible to make. The Citizen, based in the nation's seat of government and home of much of the Canadian-based diplomatic corps, had significantly greater proportions of federal and international news than did the

Edmonton paper. Table 2 reveals this and indicates that the Journal had a parochial trend, with significantly more local, provincial and out-of-province political news stories.

Other factors, such as number of political news stories, point out the obvious differences between the two cities. The average number of articles in Ottawa was 16.70, while in Edmonton it was only 9.83. The reason for this disparity could be due to competition. Edmonton enjoyed a monopoly situation for many years. The Journal was not forced by competitive pressures to maintain a high political news profile. Competition increased the number of political news stories, but not significantly. In Ottawa, the competitive situation posed by the Journal forced the Citizen to maintain a high political news profile. The loss of the second paper caused few differences in the Citizen in basic quality. The competitive status the paper had to contend with before the change in status could be the factor determining its makeup, not the current competitive status. The effects of different competitive situations in both newspapers on the quanitity of political news stories is minimal. The differences noted in the locale of the stories could be a factor affecting the total number of stories covered. Perhaps federal and international political news stories are more prevalent than local or provincial

Table 2

Proportion of Political News Stories by Locale

	Edmonton	Ottawa
Local	0.15	0.07
Province	0.08	0.06
Out-of-province	0.16	0.11
Federal	0.33	0.40
Foreign	0.28	0.37

political news stories. The result of the comparison suggested above is to point out that, in most regards, comparisons of values or raw numbers between the two cities is not an exercise of much value. A check for similar trends is the best way to determine if different competitive situations affect a newspaper's roles and responsibilities.

Political News

The result of the political news analysis suggested that different competitive situations did not affect the newspaper's political content. Ten factors were considered in the analysis and only on two factors (number of articles and number of pages) were similar trends noted. As Table 3 reveals, in both cases the competitive paper had "more" than the monopoly paper. However, the differences between competitive and monopoly papers were not statistically significant at the .05 level. The other eight factors all showed opposite trends. A specific examination of each paper in both times might show a trend in each separately that is not immediately evident. The Ottawa paper revealed that the competitive paper had the greater number of articles, as well as the longer articles. In Edmonton, the paper with the larger number of articles (the competitive paper) had the shorter articles. The competitive paper in Edmonton then appears to be giving the

Table 3

Summary of Political News Stories by Test Variables

City	Edmonton		Ottawa	
	Monopoly	Competition	Monopoly	Competition
Avg. No./Paper	8.97	10.69	16.06	17.34
Avg. Size of Article**	147.45	88.47*	132.76	140.62
Avg. Size of Headline**	29.11	23.98*	30.76	31.50
Avg. Total Size of Article**	170.37	110.91*	160.46	171.96*
Avg. Size of News/Paper**	1566.84	1203.74*	2475.16	2880.16
Avg. No. of Pages/Issue	99.97	109.25	79.22	87.28
Prop. Before Editorial Page	0.15	0.29*	0.52	0.18*
Quadrant Scoring***	2.33	2.31	2.19	2.27
Prop. with Local Source	0.29	0.33	0.39	0.30*
Prop. with Local Subject	0.16	0.13	0.05	0.09*

*Denotes a statistically significant difference at the .05 level.

** All measures are in square centimeters.

*** Details of the method of scoring prominence by quadrant located in can be found below.

readers a little about a lot of things, while the monopoly paper spent more space discussing fewer things. The competitive paper might be accused of sacrificing depth for variety, but one cannot conclude that fewer and longer articles are necessarily better. Likewise, it cannot be assumed that many short articles are less informative than longer articles. Thus although differences were found for the size variables across competitive situations, no conclusions can be drawn about the effects of the difference on the role and responsibilities of the press.

In Ottawa, the results revealed only statistically insignificant differences in the size variables. The competitive paper showed a slight increase in the amount of political news it carried, but no significant differences were recorded.

In Edmonton, the monopoly period revealed figures in all four size variables that were larger than the competitive period, and significant. In Ottawa, the competitive period had the larger values in the four size variables, but only one was statistically significant.

Two variables were measured to examine the 'news play' of the political news stories. Stories placed before the editorial page were thought to receive more news play or prominence than those placed in the later pages, among the sports, classified ads and women's fashions. The pages

before the editorials were usually designated for only news, while those following the editorials were surrounded by nonpolitical news features. The variable was calculated as proportion of political news stories placed before the editorial page. In both Edmonton and Ottawa, this variable showed statistical significance over the two time periods. In Edmonton, more stories were placed before the editorial pages (0.29 vs. 0.15) than in the competitive paper. The results show the monopoly paper having significantly more of its stories before the editorial pages (0.52 vs. 0.18). In the monopoly paper, however, the movement of the editorial pages further back into the paper could have been the factor that caused the large increase in the pre-editorial page articles.

The second location variable was the quadrant in which the article was placed. Budd asked editors about the placement of an article on a page and most agreed that a certain placement denoted a more important story.(3) Budd's system was limited to a two-part breakdown, above and below the fold line at the centre. The breakdown used here and reported in Figure 2 is more detailed and allows for a greater precision in coding.

Figure 2

Quadrant Placement Scoring Chart

even numbered page			odd numbered page		
3	3	2	2	3	3
3	2	2	2	2	3
2	2	1	1	2	2

As the coding diagram suggests, the stories were coded on a three-point system. Those receiving the greatest prominence were given a value of three, those receiving a lesser profile play received a score of two and those placed to reflect a low importance were scored as a one. A composite value for each paper was created, ranging from 1 to 3. In Edmonton, the monopoly paper had a higher news play score (2.33 vs 2.31), but this was not statistically significant. In Ottawa, the competitive paper had the higher news play score (2.27 vs. 2.19), but the differences were not statistically significant. Again, the two cities had opposite results. What is perhaps more significant here however is the overall trend on the two news play variables. Neither city showed the same trend towards news play across both prominence variables. In addition, the trend reflected in Ottawa was opposite to that recorded in Edmonton. However, in all cases, no paper had a high score on both news play variables. In the Edmonton Journal, the period with the greater prominence was competitive for the page placed on and monopoly for the quadrant located in. In the

Ottawa Citizen, the period with the higher political news profile was the monopoly period for the page placed on and competitive for the quadrant located in. The competitive situation had little effect on the news play of political news stories.

The last two variables dealing with political news stories are the source and the locale. With regards to locale, in neither city were relationships found between the competitive status and the locale. As such, the variables were recoded as local or nonlocal. Analysts have shown greatest concern with the effects of monopoly on the local content of a newspaper.(4) Other media, such as television and radio and other national or provincial newspapers offer competition on nonlocal news stories. The daily newspaper often is the only source of local news and, as this concern over the local character of the stories was a factor that could be studied, it was examined. The number of local stories was determined, and the proportion of local to total political news stories calculated. The Journal had a greater proportion of local stories in the monopoly period (0.16) than in the competitive period (0.13), although the difference was not statistically significant. The Citizen had more local stories during the competitive period (0.09) than in the monopoly period (0.05). These differences were statistically signficant. However, with the Edmonton paper

showing neither significant results nor results reflecting the same trend as Ottawa, the Ottawa results are certainly not conclusive.

The second variable dealing with the local character of the newspaper concerns the source of a story. Some analysts feel that a monopoly situation would allow the newspaper to cut its reporting staff and increase the use of wire services.(5) The stories were coded as either in-house or wire service, and the proportion of in-house (local) to the total was calculated. In Edmonton, the competitive paper had a greater proportion (0.33) of in-house stories than the monopoly paper (0.29). The difference however was not statistically significant. In Ottawa, the situation was reversed. Here the monopoly paper had the greater proportion of in-house stories (0.39) compared to the competitive paper (0.30). The differences here were statistically significant. Again it was noted that Edmonton and Ottawa had different results on both of these variables and there was not a similar trend between the two newspapers.

In conclusion, political news was not affected in any consistent manner by different competitive situations experienced by the paper. Not all the variables examined are as important to the subject at hand - the effects of competitive status on political news. The number of stories placed before the editorial pages is not as significant to

the newspaper's role of information provider as something more basic such as the number of political news stories. However, in the analysis here, none of the variables revealed a difference of any great strength, nor did any one variable appear to have results which differed greatly from the overall trend of no difference. The analysis revealed that few factors were affected by the change in competitive status in a manner that could suggest any clearly discernable effects.

Editorials

The effects of different competitive situations on editorial function was determined by examination of in-house editorials. Comparisons of the in-house editorials yielded differences that were not statistically significant. Again, as with the political news analysis, differences were expected. The relationship between monopoly and competitive newspapers was expected to be similar in both papers. In none of the five categories were the differences between monopoly and competitive papers significant. In three of the categories the papers exhibited a similar trend. Table 4 shows that both papers had a greater proportion of negative editorials in monopoly times (in Edmonton, 0.59 vs. 0.47; in Ottawa, 0.61 vs. 0.51). As well, both papers had a greater proportion of advocating editorials in competitive

times (in Edmonton, 0.59 vs. 0.36; in Ottawa, 0.42 vs. 0.29), although not significantly so. Likewise, the proportion of local editorials in each newspaper was greater in the monopoly period (in Edmonton, 0.27 vs. 0.20; in Ottawa, 0.10 vs. 0.07) although the differences were not significant. The other two factors, proportion of political editorials, and number of editorials, showed opposite results. In Edmonton, the competitive paper (0.73 vs. 0.69) had the greater proportion of political editorials, while in Ottawa, the monopoly paper (0.83 vs. 0.80) had the greater proportion of political editorials. Again, however, the differences were not significant.

The editorials were broken down by locale and compared. The concern raised in the literature was over the effects of different competitive situations on the local editorials.(6) There were no statistically significant differences in the number of local editorials across the different competitive situations. Table 5 reveals that in only one of the locale categories was there a significant difference. There was a greater proportion of federal editorials in the competitive newspaper (0.54 vs. 0.35) in Ottawa than in the monopoly period. The reason for this is perhaps due more to the defeat of the federal government (autumn of 1979) and the approach of the Quebec referendum on sovereignty-association than with any change in competitive status. Note that the

Table 4

Summary of Editorials by Test Variables

	Edmonton		Ottawa	
	Monopoly	Competition	Monopoly	Competition
Average Number of Editorials per Issue				
	2.97	2.94	2.56	2.81
Proportion of Editorials that are:				
Negative	0.59	0.47	0.61	0.51
Advocating	0.36	0.38	0.61	0.51
Political	0.69	0.73	0.83	0.80
Local	0.27	0.20	0.10	0.07

Table 5

Proportion of Editorials by Locale

	Edmonton		Ottawa	
	Monopoly	Competition	Monopoly	Competition
Local	0.27	0.20	0.07	0.10
Province	0.20	0.21	0.16	0.12
Federal	0.38	0.46	0.35	0.54*
Foreign	0.04	0.06	0.30	0.19
General	0.11	0.06	0.10	0.04

* Denotes statistically significant difference at the .05 level.

competitive paper in Edmonton (also autumn 1979) shows more federal editorials than the monopoly paper (0.46 vs. 0.38) although the differences are not signficant.

With regards to editorials, it appears that different competitive situations did not greatly affect the newspaper's ability to carry out its editorial function.

One area of concern with regards to editorials was the effect of competitive status on the local orientation of the editorial. This concern involved more than whether or not the editorial involved a local subject. Concern was raised as well that local editorials would be less political, less advocating and less negative in a monopoly situation.(7) In other words, it was felt that the local editorial would lose its ability to editorialize in a monopoly situation. The non-competitive newspaper would have a monopoly on local news and thus it was felt that in a period without competition, the paper would print less local editorials. The concern that even in a competitive situation this lack of editorializing could occur was also suggested. This was thought to be caused by a fear of alienating a possible customer.(8) An analysis was carried out to determine if a relationship existed between local editorials, the stance of the editorial, the purpose and the political nature of the editorial. Table 6 reveals that in all categories, except one, differences were produced that were not statistically

Table 6

Summary of Local Editorials by Test Variables

	Edmonton		Ottawa	
	Monopoly	Competition	Monopoly	Competition
Proportion of Local Editorials that are:				
Negative	0.50	0.58	1.00	0.33*
Advocating	0.73	0.26	0.50	0.67
Political	0.73	0.26	0.50	0.56
Number of Local Editorials				
	26.00	19.00	6.00	9.00

* Denotes a statistically significant difference at the .05 level.

significant. The one case of significance occured in the Ottawa comparison where the difference between the proportion of negative editorials in the two time periods was statistically significant. However, it must be pointed out that there were only six local editorials in the monopoly period (all negative) and only nine in the competitive period (three negative). Although the monopoly period had more negative editorials, the numbers being dealt with are not large, and as such, the results could be open to a number of interpretations. The caution exercised in placing confidence in the significance of the differences between competitive and monopoly newspapers in Ottawa on the proportion of negative local editorials seems to be a valid caveat. None of the other categories revealed differences of any statistical significance. Again, as with many of the results of this analysis, the situations in Edmonton and Ottawa show opposite results. In Edmonton, the competitive paper (0.58 vs. 0.50) had more negative local editorials while in Ottawa the monopoly paper (1.00 vs. 0.33) had the greater proportion. The monopoly paper (0.73 vs. 0.26) in Edmonton advocated more in local editorials than in the competitive newspaper. In Ottawa, the competitive paper (0.67 vs. 0.50) had more advocating local edtorials. The greater number of political local editorials was found in Edmonton in the monopoly (0.73 vs. 0.20) and in Ottawa in the competitive (0.56 vs. 0.50) time.

On the whole, the local editorials do not show any great differences over competitive periods with regards to stance, purpose or political nature. The results of the analysis on local editorials and editorials in general support the thesis of the study that a different competitive status will not alter the editorializing role of the newspaper.

Political Comment and Letters to the Editor

Political comment and letters to the editor, the last areas to be studied, proved to be the most interesting in terms of results. Political comment and letters to the editor were measured on three variables: size in square centimeters, the raw frequency per competitive time and the average number per paper. As revealed in Table 7, in all six categories (three for political comment and three for letters), the Edmonton paper showed statistically significant differences, all favouring the competitive paper. The Edmonton paper had more space devoted to political comment in the competitive period (1374.83 square centimeters vs. 1289.51 square centimeters), more political comment items (225 vs. 177), and more political comment items per paper (7.03 vs. 5.53). The competitive newspaper in Edmonton also had a greater space devoted to letters to the editor (683.63 square centimeters vs. 388.44 square

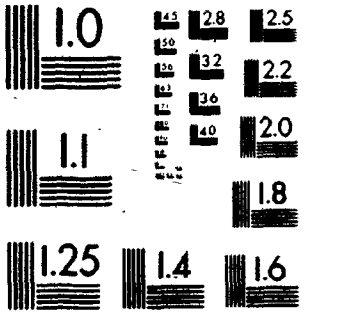

Table 7

Summary of Political Comment and Letters to the Editor by Test Variables

	Edmonton		Ottawa	
	Monopoly	Competition	Monopoly	Competition
Political Comment				
Avg. Size of Comment/Issue**	1289.51	1374.83*	1270.77	1289.82
No. of Comment Items	177.00	225.00*	120.00	107.00*
Avg. No./Issue	5.53	7.03*	3.75	3.34
Letters to the Editor				
Size of Letters/Issue**	388.44	683.63*	447.50	427.46
No. of Letters	165.00	283.00*	185.00	150.00
Avg. No./Issue	5.14	8.84*	5.78	4.69

* Denotes a statistically significant difference at the .05 level.

** All measures are in square centimeters.

centimeters), more letters in total (283 vs. 165), and more letters per issue (8.84 vs. 5.14) The Ottawa paper had only one statistically significant difference (the number of political comment items), and on this it was not consistent with the Edmonton results. The monopoly paper in Ottawa had the greater number of political comment items (120 vs. 107). On only one variable did the Edmonton paper and the Ottawa paper agree - Ottawa also had more column space devoted to political comment in the competitive period than in the monopoly period (1289.82 square centimeters vs. 1270.77 square centimeters). The monopoly paper in Ottawa averaged more political comment items per paper (3.75 vs. 3.34). As well, the monopoly paper had more space devoted to letters to the editor (447.50 square centimeters vs. 427.46 square centimeters), more letters in total (185 vs. 150) and more letters on average in each issue (5.78 vs. 4.69).

The results however only reflect the confusion suggested in the literature.(9) As there was no consensus in the literature concerning the effects of competitive status on political comment and letters to the editor, it is not surprising that this work finds equally confusing results. In Edmonton, the appearance of a second paper appears to have widened the opportunity for comment. In Ottawa, it is the loss of competition which seems to have widened the opportunity for citizenry comment and feedback.

The data have suggested a number of possible explanations. Speculation can be made and conclusions drawn about the results. These will be developed in the next chapter.

Endnotes

1. The tests used to determine if the differences between the competitive and monopoly newspapers was significant depended on the form the data appeared in. In some cases, the difference between means or the difference between proportions was calculated, and tested for significance at the .05 level. Other times, the value of chi squared or F was examined for significance at the .05 level. These four types of statistics were used to determine the significance of the differences in political news, editorials and political comment and letters to the editor.

2. A few general comments about the two papers should be made based on examination of the Journal and the Citizen. A change in competitive status was accompanied in both newspapers by a change in format. The Ottawa Citizen moved features around and added features. The editorial page was moved from pages 6 and 7 to pages 8 and 9. Some regular columnists, like 'Frank Howard's Bureaucrats,' were moved from front pages to a place further back. In addition, pages were given headings to denote the subject material on each page. As well, TGIF was added. This supplement appeared in Friday papers and consisted of entertainment and lifestyle stories, targeted towards a young audience.

The Edmonton Journal also made several changes. A new numbering sequence replaced the old system of a letter and a number, based on what section the article was in. The new system was straight numbers. The Journal, as a rule, had two to three sections designated as classified ads. This was unchanged after the advent of competition, suggesting the perhaps the Sun had little initial impact on the Journal's advertising.

3. Budd, "Attention Score: A Device for Measuring News Play," p. 260.

4. Both the Kent Commission (p. 110) and the Fletcher Report (p. 42) discuss this.

5. Ibid .

6. See footnote 63, chapter II for more detail.

7. Kent Commission, p. 139.

8. See footnote 63, chapter II for more detail.

9. See footnote 57, chapter II for more detail.

Chapter IV Conclusions

It was the thesis of the study that no differences in newspapers would be found between monopoly and competitive periods in Edmonton or Ottawa. As the papers in both cities had recent changes in competitive status, they appeared to provide a good data base. A comparison of the two papers revealed that the two are quite different in makeup. Edmonton had been in a monopoly for a long period of time. Similarly, Ottawa had faced competition for many years. Both papers developed certain styles as a result. The change in competitive status had very little overall effect on either paper.

The fears and concerns that have prompted much of the work on the subject of competition (e.g., the Kent Commission) have centred on the loss of competition. Since the Ottawa situation in the study most directly corresponds to this worrisome scenario, the results of the analysis for Ottawa should allay some of the fears most frequently expressed. As the summary in Table 8 reveals, only six of

twenty-four comparisons of the Ottawa newspapers produced significant differences. Of these six significant differences, only two reflected differences in which the competitive paper achieved larger values than the monopoly paper. In these two comparisons, the larger values in the competitive newspaper referred to the total size of the political news stories in the newspaper and the proportion of local political news stories. Table 8 reveals that the four differences in which the monopoly press achieved larger values referred to the proportion of political news stories placed before the editorial page, the proportion of in-house stories, the proportion of negative local editorials and the number of political comment pieces. Generally, the Ottawa paper remained unaffected by the loss in competition; indeed, it seems that the paper improved its reporting in four areas.

Although the city of Edmonton gained in competition by the advent of the Sun, the monopoly version of the Journal was remarkably similar to its competitive forerunner. The Edmonton Journal produced statistically significant differences in only 11 categories. Four of these concerned the space allotted to political news stories, and in each case, the monopoly paper devoted more space to political news. Six comparisons concerned the political comment and the letters to the editor section and, in each case, the

Table 8

Summary of Differences Between Competitive Periods**

	Edmonton	Ottawa
Political News		
Average Number of Articles	competitive	competitive
Size per Article	monopoly*	competitive
Size of Headline	monopoly*	competitive
Total Size per Article	monopoly*	competitive*
Average Size per Issue	monopoly*	competitive
Pages per Issue	competitive	competitive
Placement re Editorials	competitive*	monopoly*
Quadrant Located In	monopoly	competitive
Locally Written Stories	competitive	monopoly*
Local Subject in Story	monopoly	competitive*
Editorials		
Number per Paper	monopoly	competitive
Proportion:		
Negative	monopoly	monopoly
Advocating	competitive	competitive
Political	competitive	monopoly
Local	monopoly	monopoly
Local Editorials		
Proportion:		
Negative	competitive	monopoly*
Advocating	monopoly	competitive
Political	monopoly	competitive
Political Comment		
Size of Political Comment	competitive*	competitive
Number Studied	competitive*	monopoly*
Average per Issue	competitive*	monopoly
Letters to the Editor		
Size of Letters	competitive*	monopoly
Number Studied	competitive*	monopoly
Average per Paper	competitive*	monopoly

** Competitive period listed in table represents the period with the larger value on each variable.

* Denotes statistically significant difference at the .05 level.

competitive paper devoted more space to political comment. The other area of significant difference concerned the placing of news in the paper: the competitive newspaper placed more news articles before the editorial pages than the monopoly version.

One area the study sought to address concerned the validity of fears about monopoly press. Contrary to the claims of critics, in neither city was the monopoly paper lagging far behind the competitive paper in terms of political news, editorials or political comment. The loss of competition itself did not significantly alter the political and editorial makeup of the paper. The fears then, might be unfounded.

A brief look at the three major kinds of comparisons studied here reveals that there are few areas where the two newspapers show similar trends. Only five categories reveal differences of a similar nature and none of these differences are statistically significant. Three categories reveal differences that are significant in both cities, but these differences show that the opposite competitive periods had the larger values.

These results suggest several possible explanations. The first is that the basic thesis expressed in this analysis is correct - that the political content of a newspaper is the same regardless of competitive situation.

However, other possible explanations for the results do exist.

One possibility is that a loss in competition does not simply reverse the process triggered by a gain in competition. It was found that with an increase in competition, the Edmonton Journal significantly increased its political commentary and letters to the editor. The Ottawa paper, on the other hand, was largely unaffected by its loss of competition. Perhaps an increase in competition is more of an incentive to change the paper than a loss in competition. It is possible that, as the only factor so affected was the comment and local opinion areas, the Edmonton Journal was seeking to keep readers by allowing them more opportunity for input into the paper. Regardless of the motivation for this difference, it is probable that the deciding factor was the increase in competition and not merely a difference in competitive situations.

The results here show that neither a loss of competition nor a gain in competition changes the paper significantly. The fact that neither paper was affected greatly by a change in either direction does not, of course, lay the issue to rest. Edmonton, with many years of monopoly behind it, had fewer political news stories than the long-time competitive Ottawa paper. The differences between the two papers were many, although the change of

competitive status did not significantly alter either paper. Thus, the conclusion that different competitive status is not a factor in determining political news is warranted. No conclusions can be reached here about the effects of prolonged exposure to one particular competitive situation. However, the fact that only political comment was affected suggests that this explanation is limited in its applicability to the entire body of results.

The analysis between the Ottawa and Edmonton papers proved of little value in this report. While both Edmonton and Ottawa were in a competitive situation in the same period (1979), the makeup of the two papers was very different. The differences could be the result of regional effects, the accessibility of other media, the ownership, or it could be a result of prolonged periods of one type of competitive situation.

Perhaps the factor to be studied in future ought not to be differences in the same newspaper, but rather differences in many papers experiencing different competitive situations. The methodological flaws in earlier studies were that they tried to compare two newspapers, one in a monopoly and one in a competitive situation. This would be similar to attempts here to compare the Edmonton and Ottawa newspapers with each other. Clearly, such a comparison would prove inconclusive. The results could be attributed

as much to the differences in the makeup of the two newspapers as to the specific effects of competition. Other studies which examined one paper in two competitive situations produced results from which it was difficult to generalize. Different competitive situations could affect the ability of each individual newspaper to carry out the role and responsibilities of the press.

In examining these problems, the decision was made to look at two newspapers, each experiencing two different competitive situations. This was designed to avoid some of the problems of previous studies. Nevertheless, these problems were not entirely avoided. The methodology and data base employed here are open to question.

A further factor to be considered when reviewing the results is the possibility that one or both of the newspapers chosen for this study represent abberations. It is possible that had the study consisted of only one paper, the results would be viewed differently. Many of the results in one city were contradicted by results in the other. Had only one city been the subject of the analysis, the conclusions reached might have suggested that differences do occur. However, the use of two newspapers revealed that any differences that do occur are minimal and not consistent across newspapers. It is probable that outside influences such as the advent of the Globe and Mail

national edition and the availability of other media, especially in Ottawa, have caused the results to reflect the impact of other factors besides the different competitive situations. It must be pointed out that an ideal research design for this type of investigation is probably unattainable. All competitive and monopoly situations in Canada are affected by a host of extraneous factors. The effects of these outside influences on each competitive situation are unknowns in the research here.

The last factor to be considered is that of the time frame chosen. The two papers were considered over a total time span of four years (1977-1981). Only one year on either side of the change in competitive status was examined. The Edmonton Journal was examined in 1977, and two years later, after the Sun had been in competition for about a year. The Ottawa Citizen was examined in 1979 when it was competing with the Ottawa Journal, and again in 1981, about a year after its competitor had folded. Differences might be found if the time frame was expanded. The Journal might be different now in 1982 as the Sun has increased its circulation. As well, the Citizen might be less concerned about political content as the public relaxes its scrutiny. The initial strong concerns that surfaced after the closing of the Ottawa Journal and the release of the Report of the Royal Commission on Newspapers have diminished. Further

study of these two papers would enhance our knowledge about the effects of the different competitive situations. The probability of changes in technology and market place must also be taken into consideration if a longer time period is used.

Within the context of the literature on competition in the newspaper industry, this study addresses only some of the questions. Its basic conclusion that, at least in the short run, a newspaper's political content is largely unaffected by different competitive situations, should allay the worst fears of media observers and critics regarding the consequences of diminished competition in the industry. However, it does not address, nor could it address, the concerns of those who are opposed in principle to the institution of a monopoly press.

The study examined many areas of the newspaper that could possibly be affected by different competitive situations. These areas were chosen because they were deemed to be areas of import to the reader of a newspaper and they were areas that seemed vital to the newspapers' functions, roles, and responsibilities. However, the fact that no major differences were discovered between the monopoly and competitive periods of each newspaper does not mean that over time, differences will not occur. A worried citizen is concerned about the unknown potential for

dramatic differences. He or she is worried that, by the time the studies and reports on the effects of the losses reveal that monopoly newspapers have less politcal news or less editorials, it will be too late. The results here can only attest to the fact that currently, in two Canadian cities, the competitive status did not affect the newspapers' political content.

Appendix I A Statement of Principles

for Canadian daily newspapers

(Adopted by the Canadian Daily Newspaper Publishers Association, April, 1977)

I ETHICS

Newspapers have individual codes of ethics and this declaration of principle is intended to complement them in their healthy diversity. As individual believers in free speech they have a duty to maintain standards of conduct in conformance with their own goals.

II FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

Freedom of the press is an exercise of the common right to freedom of speech. It is the right to inform, to discuss, to advocate, to dissent. The Press claims no freedom that is not the right of every person. Truth emerges from free discussion and free reporting and both are essential to foster and preserve a democratic society.

III REPONSIBILITY

The newspaper has responsibilities to its readers, its shareholders, its employees and its advertisers. But the operation of a newspaper is in effect a public trust, no less binding because it is not formally conferred, and its overriding responsibility is to the society which protects and provides its freedom.

IV ACCURACY AND FAIRNESS

The newspaper keeps faith with its readers by presenting the news comprehensively, accurately and fairly, and by acknowledging mistakes promptly.

Fairness requires a balanced presentation of the relevant facts in a news report, and of all substantial opinions in a matter of controversy. It precludes distortion of meaning by over- or under-emphasis, by placing facts or quotations out of context, or by headlines not warranted by the text. When statements are made that injure the reputation of an individual or group those affected should be given the earliest opportunity to reply.

Fairness requires that in the reporting of news, the right of every person to a fair trial should be respected.

Fairness also requires that sources of information should be identified except when there is a clear and

pressing reason to protect their anonymity. Except in rare circumstances, reporters should not conceal their own identity. Newspapers and their staffs should not induce people to commit illegal or improper acts. Sound practice makes a clear distinction for the reader between news reports and expressions of opinion.

V INDEPENDENCE

The newspaper should hold itself free of any obligation save that of fidelity to the public good. It should pay the costs incurred in gathering and publishing news. Conflicts of interest, and the appearance of conflicts of interest, must be avoided. Outside interests that could affect, or appear to affect the newspaper's freedom to report the news impartially should be avoided.

VI PRIVACY

Every person has a right to privacy. There are inevitable conflcits between the right to privacy and the public good or the right to know about the conduct of public affairs. Each case should be judged in the light of common sense and humanity.

VII ACCESS

The newspaper is a forum for the free interchange of information and opinion. It should provide for the expression in its columns of disparate and conflicting views. It should give expression to the interests of minorities as well as majorities, and of the less powerful elements in society.

Source: Kent Commission.

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